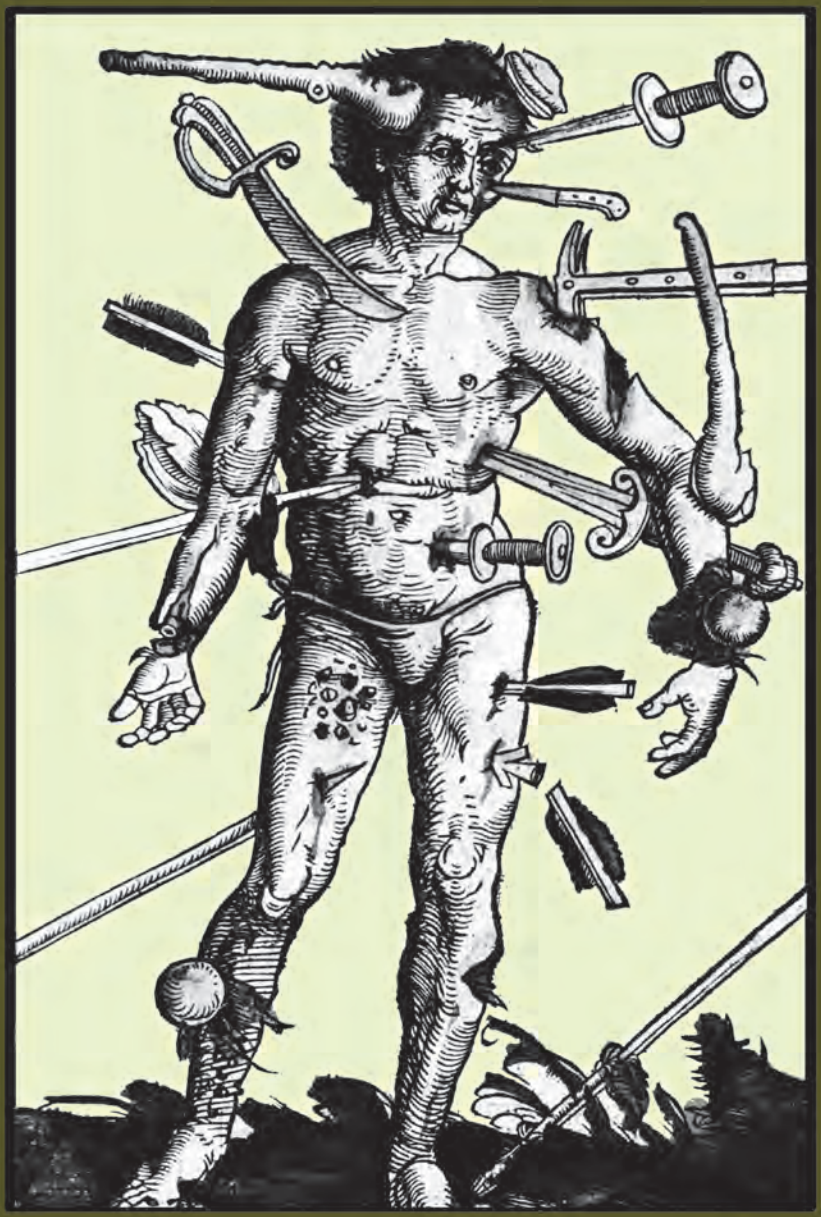
Willful Disobedience



Wolfi Landstreicher

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Willful Disobedience by Wolfi Landstreicher

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INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF THIS PROJECT

This book is a selection of short theoretical and agitational essays from the publication I published from 1996 until 2005, Willful Disobedience. I used this publication as a vehicle for expressing ideas that reflect how I have striven to project my life and my battle against the present social order, with the hope of provoking discussion and discovering new accomplices in rebellion. It was an explicitly anarchist project in opposing to every form of authority the self-determination of individuals who refuse all domination; it was insurrectionary in its recognition that authority must be attacked and destroyed as an essential part of the project of creating our lives for ourselves based upon our desires. That means that the project was not a forum for democratic dialogue in which all ideas are equal and therefore equally vapid...The understanding of anarchic insurgence on which I based this project is as follows:

Within the present social context our lives as individuals have been made alien to us; the interactions and activities that create this society are not based on the singularity of our unconstrained dreams and desires, but only serve the continuing reproduction of a dominating social order by channeling the energy of desire into that reproduction through a variety of institutions and systems which integrate to form civilized society: the state, capital, work, technology, religion, education, ideology, law... Opposition to this begins when we as individuals rise up in willful disobedience and begin attacking and destroying all institutions of domination, not as a cause, but for ourselves, because we want to create our own games...

- Wolfi Landstreicher

Volume One

1996-1999

WITHOUT ASKING PERMISSION

The social system that surrounds us is immense, a network of institutions and relationships of authority and control that encompasses the globe. It usurps the lives of individuals, forcing them into interactions and activities that serve only to reproduce society. Yet this vast social system only exists through the continuing habitual obedience of those whom it exploits.

While some wait for the masses or the exploited class to rise up, I recognize that masses and classes are themselves social relationships against which I rise up. For it is *my* life as a unique individual with singular desires and dreams that has been usurped from me and made alien in interactions and activities not of my own creation. Everywhere there are laws and rules, rights and duties, documents, licenses and permits…Then there are those of us who never again want to ask permission.

Knowing that the reproduction of society depends upon our obedience, I choose a life of willful disobedience. By this, I do not mean that I will make sure that every action I take will break a rule or law—that is as much enslavement to authority as obedience. Rather I mean that with all the strength I have, I will create my life and my activities as my own without any regard for authority… or regarding it only as my enemy. I do all I can to prevent my life from being usurped by work, by the economy, by survival. Of course, as I go about making my living activities and interactions my own, all the structures of social control move to suppress this spark of life that is my singularity. And so I mercilessly attack this society that steals my life from me with the intent of destroying it.

For those of us who will have our lives as our own without ever asking permission, willful disobedience must become an insurrection of unique individuals intent on razing society to the ground.

STEAL BACK YOUR LIFE

Economy—the domination of survival over life—is essential for the maintenance of all other forms of domination. Without the threat of scarcity, it would be difficult to coerce people into obedience to the daily routine of work and pay. We were born into an economized world. The social institution of property has made scarcity a daily threat. Property, whether private or communal, separates the individual from the world, creating a situation in which, rather than simply taking what one wants or needs, one is supposed to ask permission, a permission generally only granted in the form of economic exchange. In this way, different levels of poverty are guaranteed to everyone, even the rich, because under the rule of social property what one is not permitted to have far exceeds what one is permitted to have. The domination of survival over life is maintained.

Those of us who desire to create our lives as our own recognize that this domination, so essential to the maintenance of society, is an enemy we must attack and destroy. With this understanding, theft and squatting can take on significance as part of an insurgent life project. Welfare scamming, eating at charity feeds, dumpster diving and begging may allow one to survive without a regular job, but they do not in any way attack the economy; they are within the economy. Theft and squatting are also often merely survival tactics. Squatters who demand the "right to a home" or try to legalize their squats, thieves who work their "jobs" like any other worker, only in order to accumulate more worthless commodities—these people have no interest in destroying the economy...they merely want a fair share of its goods. But those who squat and steal as part

of an insurgent life do so in defiance of the logic of economic property. Refusing to accept the scarcity imposed by this logic or to bow to the demands of a world they did not create, such insurgents take what they desire without asking anyone's permission whenever the possibility arises. In this defiance of society's economic rule, one takes back the abundance of the world as one's own—and this is an act of insurrection. In order to maintain social control, the lives of individuals have to be stolen away. In their place, we received economic survival, the tedious existence of work and pay. We cannot buy our lives back, nor can we beg them back. Our lives will only be our own when we steal them back—and that means taking what we want without asking permission.

THE WILD DOGS HOWL

A story is told of Diogenes, probably the best known of the ancient Greek cynics: It is said that one day, as he was sunning himself in the bathtub he called home, Alexander the "great" came to speak with him. This emperor of many nations said, " I am Alexander, prince of Macedonia and the world. I have heard you are a great philosopher. Do you have any words of wisdom for me?" Annoyed at such a petty disturbance of his calm, Diogenes answered, "Yes, you're standing in my sun. Get out of the way." Though this story is most likely fictional, it reflects the scorn in which cynics held all authority and their boldness in expressing this scorn. These self-proclaimed "dogs" (wild dogs, of course) rejected hierarchy, social restraints and the alleged need for laws and greeted these with sarcastic mockery.

How utterly different this ancient cynicism was from what now goes by that name. Several years ago, a radical group in England called the Pleasure Tendency published a pamphlet

entitled "Theses Against Cynicism". In this pamphlet, they criticize an attitude of hip detachment, of shallow, sarcastic despair—and particularly the penetration of this attitude into anti-authoritarian and revolutionary circles.

The proponents of this present-day "cynicism" are everywhere. The hip, sarcastic comedy of Saturday Night Live or the Comedy Channel presents no real challenge to the ruling powers. In fact, this smirking know-it-all-ism is the yuppie attitude *par excellence*. It has nothing to do with a real understanding of what's going on, but is rather a justification for conformity. "Yes, we know what the politicians and corporate executives are up to. We know it's all a dirty game. But there's nothing we can do about it, so we're gonna get our piece of the action". There's nothing we can do about it —that is the message of this modern cynicism—not disdain for authority, but disdain for those who still dare to challenge it rather than joining in its game with a knowing smirk.

This attitude has entered the circles of so-called revolutionaries and anarchists through the back door of post-modern philosophy in which ironic hyper-conformity is presented as a viable revolutionary strategy. With a straight face (or just the trace of a smirk), the most radical of the post-modern philosophers tell us that we need only push the logic of capitalism to its own "schizophrenic" extreme and it will break down on its own. For these present-day "radical" cynics, attempts to attack and destroy this society are foolish and ineffective, and attempts to create one's own life in opposition to this society is attachment to an out-dated individualism. Of course, these mostly French philosophers are rarely read. Like mainstream "cynicism", post-modern "cynicism" needs it hip popularizers—and they certainly have appeared. Sarcastically tearing down every significant insurgent idea or activity of the past century while promoting pathetic liberal eclecticism and ridiculous art or mystical movements as "revolutionary" or

"iconoclastic", these alternative yuppies—who often claim to reject individuality—mainly just to promote themselves and their own pathetic projects. One needs only to notice Steward Home's Mona Lisa smirk to realize he is just Jay Leno with a shaved head and a pair of Docs.

Perhaps the worst effect of the post-modern penetration into anarchist circles is its reinforcement of a tendency to reject theory, any attempts to understand society in its totality in order to fight it more effectively are either called dogmatic or are seen as proof that those who make such attempts are hopelessly naive with no understanding of the complexity of "post-modern" post-industrial society. Of course, the "understanding" these oh-so-wise(-ass) anti-theorists have is simply their faith in the impossibility of analysis, a faith which allows them to continue their ritual of piecemeal activism which has long since proven ineffective for anything other than occasionally pushing the social system into making changes necessary for its own continued reproduction. Those who continue to make insurgent theory are accused by the self-proclaimed activists of sitting in ivory towers, regardless of how much this insurgence is put into practice.

When one considers the original Greek cynics, one is averse to using the same term for their modern namesakes. Yet the present-day "cynics" are much more like the dogs we are familiar with—pathetic, dependent, domesticated pets. Like well-trained puppies, they rarely make it past the front yard gate before they run back cowering to the safety of their master's house; then they learn to bark and snarl at the wild dogs who dare to live outside the fence and, in exchange for a milkbone, lick the hands that keep them on the leash. I would rather be among the wild dogs howling out my scorn for every master, prepared to bite any hand that tries to tame. I reject the sarcastic despair that passes as cynicism today, in order to grasp as a weapon the untamed cynicism which dares to tell authority, "You're standing in my sun. Get out of the way!"

BELIEF:
The Enemy of Thinking

It is not uncommon in american anarchist circles to hear someone say, "I believe in fairies", "I believe in magic", "I believe in ghosts" or the like. Only rarely do these believers claim a direct experience of the phenomena they claim to believe in. Much more often it is a friend, a relative or that standard favorite, "someone I met" who supposedly had the experience. When there is a direct experience, a little bit of questioning usually reveals that the actual experience has, at best, a very tenuous connection to the belief it is used to support. Yet if one dares to point this out, one may be accused of denying the believer's experience and of being a cold-hearted rationalist.

Neo-paganism and mysticism have penetrated deeply into the american anarchist scene, undermining a healthy skepticism that seems so essential to the battle against authority. We were all well trained to *believe*—to accept various ideas as true without examination and to interpret our experiences based on these beliefs. Since we were taught how to believe, not how to think, when we reject the beliefs of the mainstream, it is much easier to embrace an alternative belief system than to begin the struggle of learning to think for ourselves. When this rejection includes a critique of civilization, one can even justify the embrace of mystical beliefs as a return to the animism or earth religion attributed to non-civilized people. But some of us have no interest in belief systems. Since we want to think for ourselves, and such thinking has nothing in common with belief of any sort.

Probably one of the reasons american anarchists shy away from skepticism—other than that belief is easier—is that

scientific rationalists have claimed to be skeptics while pushing a plainly authoritarian belief system. Magazines such as the *Skeptical Inquirer* have done much of worth in debunking new age bullshit, mystical claims and even such socially significant beliefs as the "satanic abuse" myth, but they have failed to turn the same mystical eye on the mainstream beliefs of established science. For a long time, science has been able to hide behind the fact that it uses some fairly reliable methods in its activities. Certainly. observation and experimentation are essential tools in the development of ways of thinking that are one's own. But science does not apply these methods freely to the exploration of self-determined living, but uses them in a system of beliefs. Stephen Jay Gould is a firm believer in science; he is also unusually honest about it. In one of his books, I found a discussion of the basis of science. He states clearly that the basis of science is not, as is popularly thought, the so-called "scientific method" (i.e., empirical observation and experimentation), but rather the *belief* that there are universal laws by which nature has consistently operated. Gould points out that the empirical method only becomes science when applied within the context of this belief. The scientific rationalists are glad to apply their skepticism to belief in fairies or magic, but won't even consider applying it to the belief in scientific laws. In this, they are acting like the christian who scoffs at hinduism. Anarchists are wise to reject this rigid and authoritarian worldview.

But when the rejection of scientific rationalism becomes the embrace of gullibility, authority has been successful in its training. The ruling order is far less interested in what we believe than in guaranteeing that we continue to *believe* rather than beginning to , beginning to try to understand the world we encounter outside of any of the belief systems we've been given to view it through. As long as we are focused on muons or fairies, quasars or goddesses, thermodynamics or astral-

projection, we won't be asking any of the essential questions, because we'll already have answers, answers that we've come to believe in, answers that transform nothing. The hard road of doubt, which cannot (tolerate) the easy answers of either the scientist or the mystic, is the only road that begins from the individual's desire for self-determination. Real thinking is based in hard and probing questions the first of which are: why is my life so far from what I desire, and how do I transform it? When one leaps too quickly to an answer based upon belief, one has lost one's life and embraced slavery.

Skepticism is an essential tool for all who want to destroy authority. In order to learn how to explore, experiment and probe—that is, to *think* for oneself—one must refuse to *believe*. Of course, it is a struggle, often painful, without the comfort of easy answers; but it is also the adventure of discovering the world for oneself, of creating a life that, for its own pleasure, acts to destroy all authority and every social constraint. So if you speak to me of your beliefs, expect to be doubted, questioned, probed and mocked, because that within you which still needs to believe is that within you that still needs a master.

PLAY FIERCELY:
Thoughts on Growing Up

To become an adult in this society is to be mutilated. The processes of family conditioning and education subtly (and often not so subtly) terrorize children, reducing their capacity for self-determination and transforming them into beings useful to society. A well-adjusted, "mature" adult is one who accepts the humiliations that work-and-pay society constantly heaps upon them with equanimity. It is absurd to call the process that creates such a shriveled, mutilated being "growing up.

There are some of us who recognize the necessity of destroying work if we are to destroy authority. We recognize that entirely new ways of living and interacting need to be created, ways best understood as free play. Unfortunately, some of the anarchists within this milieu cannot see beyond the fact that the adult as we know it is a social mutilation and tend to idealize childhood in such a way that they embrace an artificial infantilism, donning masks of childishness to prove they've escaped this mutilation. In so doing, they limit the games they can play, particularly those games aimed at the destruction of this society.

At the age of forty, I am still able to take pleasure in playing such "children's" games as hide-and-seek or tag. Certainly, if growing up is not to be the belittling process of becoming a societal adult, none of the pleasures or games of our younger days should be given up. Rather they should be refined and expanded, opening up ever-greater possibilities for creating marvelous lives and destroying this society.

The games invented by those anarchists who have trapped themselves in their artificial infantilism are not this sort of expansive play, or not nearly enough so. Becoming "mud people" in the business district of a city, playing clown at a shopping center, parading noise orchestras through banks and other businesses is great fun and can even be a wee bit subversive. But those who consider these games a significant challenge to the social system are deluding themselves. People working in offices, factories, banks and shops do not need to be taught that there are better things to do with their time than work. Most are quite aware of this. But a global system of social control compels people to participate in its reproduction in order to guarantee themselves a certain level of survival. As long as the domination of this system seems to be inevitable and eternal, most people will adjust themselves and even feel a resigned contentment with their "lot". So anarchist insurgents

need to develop much fiercer, riskier games—games of violent attack against this system of control.

I have been chided many times for associating play with violence and destruction, occasionally by "serious revolutionaries" who tell me that the war against the power structures is no game, but more often by the proponents of anarcho-infantilism who tell me that there is nothing playful about violence. What all of these chiders have in common is that they do not understand how serious play can be. If the game one is playing is that of creating and projecting one's life for oneself, then one will take one's play quite seriously. It is not mere recreation in this case, but one's very life. This game inevitably brings one into conflict with society. One can respond to this in a merely defensive manner, but this leaves one in a stalemate with retreat becoming inevitable.

When one's passion for intense living, one's joy in the game of creating one's own life and interactions is great enough, then mere defense will not do. Attack, violent attack, becomes an essential part of the game, a part in which one can take great pleasure. Here one encounters an adventure that challenges one's capabilities, develops one's imagination as a practical weapon, takes one beyond the realm of survival's hedged bets into the world of genuine risk that is life. Can the laughter of joy exist anywhere else than in such a world, where the pleasure we take in fireworks increases a hundred-fold when we know that the fireworks are blowing up a police station, a bank, a factory or a church? For me, growing up can only mean the process of creating more intense and expansive game—of creating our lives for ourselves. As long as authority exists, this means games of violent attack against all of the institutions of society, aiming at the total destruction of these institutions. Anything less will keep us trapped in the infantile adulthood this society imposes. I desire much more.

FEAR OF CONFLICT

*"Truly it is not a failing in you that you stiffen yourself against me and assert your distinctness or peculiarity: you need not give way or renounce yourself"—**Max Stirner***

Whenever more than a few anarchists get together, there are arguments. This is no surprise, since the word "anarchist" is used to describe a broad range of often contradictory ideas and practices. The only common denominator is the desire to be rid of authority, and anarchists do not even agree on what authority is, let alone the question of what methods are appropriate for eliminating it. These questions raise many others, and so arguments are inevitable.

The arguments do not bother me. What bothers me is the focus on trying to come to an agreement. It is assumed that "because we are all anarchists", we must all really want the same thing; our apparent conflicts must merely be misunderstandings which we can talk out, finding a common ground. When someone refuses to talk things out and insists on maintaining their distinctness, they are considered dogmatic. This insistence on finding a common ground may be one of the most significant sources of the endless dialogue that so frequently takes place of acting to create our lives on our own terms. This attempt to find a common ground involves a denial of very real conflicts.

One strategy frequently used to deny conflict is to claim that an argument is merely a disagreement over words and their meanings. As if the words one uses and how one chooses to use them have no connection to one's ideas, dreams and desires. I am convinced that there are very few arguments that

are ***merely*** about words and their meanings. These few could be easily resolved if the individuals involved would clearly and precisely explain what they mean. When individuals cannot even come to an agreement about what words to use and how to use them, it indicates that their dreams, desires and ways of thinking are so far apart that even within a single language, they cannot find a common tongue. The attempt to reduce such an immense chasm to mere semantics is an attempt to deny a very real conflict and the singularity of the individuals involved.

The denial of conflict and of the singularity of individuals may reflect a fetish for unity that stems from residual leftism or collectivism. Unity has always been highly valued by the left. Since most anarchists, despite their attempts to separate themselves from the left, are merely anti-state leftists, they are convinced that only a united front can destroy this society which perpetually forces us into unities not of our choosing, and that we must, therefore, overcome our differences and join together to support the "common cause". But when we give ourselves to the "common cause", we are forced to accept the lowest common denominator of understanding and struggle. The unities that are created in this way are false unities which thrive only by suppressing the unique desires and passions of the individuals involved, transforming them into a mass. Such unities are no different from the forming of labor that keeps a factory functioning or the unity of social consensus which keeps the authorities in power and people in line. Mass unity, because it is based on the reduction of the individual to a unit in a generality, can never be a basis for the destruction of authority, only for its support in one form or another. Since we want to destroy authority, we must start from a different basis.

For me, that basis is myself—my life with all of its passions and dreams, its desires, projects and encounters. From this

basis, I make "common cause" with no one, but may frequently encounter individuals with whom I have an affinity. It may well be that your desires and passions, your dreams and projects coincide with mine. Accompanied by an insistence upon realizing these in opposition to every form of authority, such affinity is a basis for a genuine unity between singular, insurgent individuals which lasts only as long as these individuals desire. Certainly, the desire for the destruction of authority and society can move us to strive for an insurrectional unity that becomes large-scale, but never as a mass movement; instead it would need to be a coinciding of affinities between individuals who insist on making their lives their own. This sort of insurrection cannot come about through a reduction of our ideas to a lowest common denominator with which everyone can agree, but only through the recognition of the singularity of each individual, a recognition which embraces the actual conflicts that exist between individuals, regardless of how ferocious they may be, as part of the amazing wealth of interactions that the world has to offer us once we rid ourselves of the social system which has stolen our lives and our interactions from us.

TECHNOLOGY: A Limit to Creativity

Technology is a social system. In other words, it is a system of relationships that determines the interactions of human beings with each other and with their environment in such a way as to perpetuate the system. The development of agriculture is often equated with the rise of civilization because it is the first verifiable technological system to develop. Of course it did not develop alone. At the same time, the state, property, religion, economic exchange, cities, laws—an entire network of integrated systems and institutions developed. Taken

together, these are what I mean be civilization and the integral relationship between these institutions must be understood if we are to fight authority intelligently.

Within non-civilized societies, the cultural limits placed on creative expression are often very rigid (there is no use in venerating these societies), but they are also very few. There are still vast areas open for unconstrained individual creativity, vast areas for interactions with the surrounding world that are one's own, that are sources of wonder rather than repetition of the same old habitual shit. The limits probably remain so few in these societies, because social control is personal and direct, existing, for example, in kinship relationships and sexual taboos. Little thought is given in these societies to social control of the surrounding environment.

With the rise of civilization, the nature of social control underwent a qualitative change. It became impersonal and, to a large extent, indirect—controlling and shaping individuals by controlling and shaping the environment in which they exist. While the more direct forms of this impersonal social control are the work of the state, religion, laws and education, all openly authoritarian institutions, indirect social control is the work of such subtle authorities as technology, economy and the urban environment.

Agriculture and the city both create a strict connection to a specific piece of land. Agriculture requires a specific, scheduled and socially organized interaction with this piece of land. The city takes environmental control still further, creating an artificial environment for the social purposes of defense, commerce, religion and government. Its structure enforces conformity to these purposes. The activities of individuals in such an environment are restricted to specific spaces and to specific sorts of motions ad interactions.

The origin of civilization remains a realm of speculation, but its spread is within the realm of recorded history. In light

of the restrictions it places on human interactions, it should come as no surprise that historical evidence indicates that it has always only spread by the use of force against the resistance of non-civilized people and that it resorted to genocide when this resistance was too strong. Even in areas where civilization had already been established, there have always been individual resisters—vagabonds treated with distrust by both peasants and city dwellers and often on the receiving end of the violence by which the law is enforce.

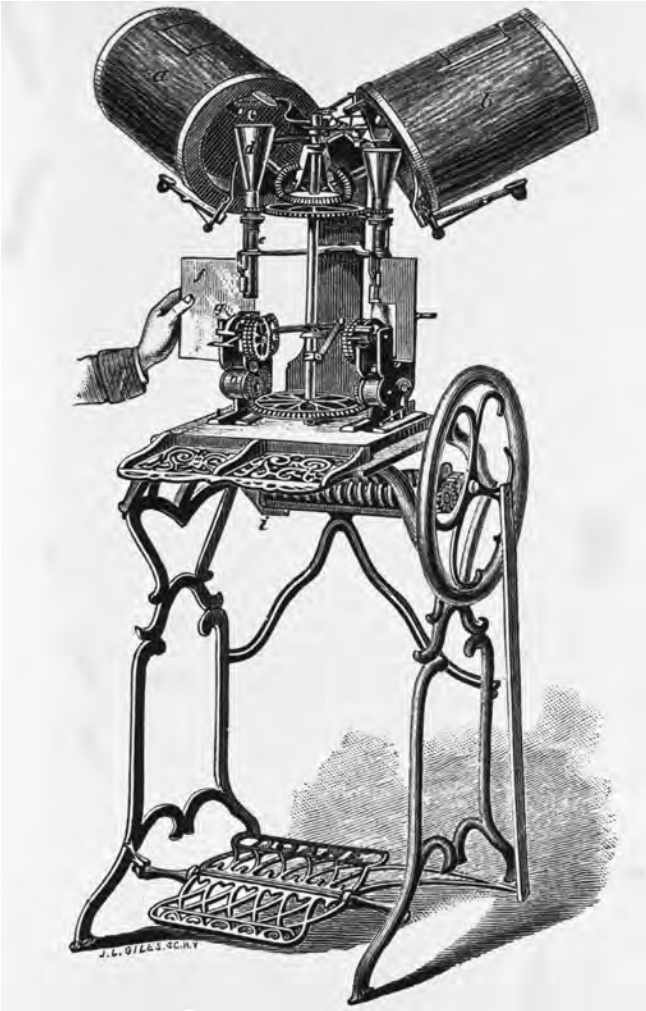
But against this resistance, civilization, nonetheless, spreads. In the fields and in the cities, technology developed and, with it, social control. Architecture developed to create the majestic, fear-inspiring temples to authority as well as the nondescript cubicles that house the lower classes. Economic exchange became too complex to go on without the lubricant of money and with this development, the classes of the rich and the poor were established. The impoverished class provided people who could be coerced into laboring for the wealthy. And what is their labor? The further development of the technology that enforces social control. Technology cannot be separated from work, nor is it without reason that each step "forward" in the development of technology has meant an increase in the amount of work necessary for social survival. As Nietzsche said, "Work is the best police", and technology is this cop's muscle.

Technology quite literally controls the activities of people in their daily lives. Any factory worker could tell the precise movements one is expected to make so many times each hour on the production line and how nonconformity to these motions can fuck up production. Computers and other office machines also require very specific, restricted motions of the people they use. And the technological methods of Taylorism are even applied to service work, as ten days of hectic wage slavery at Wendy's and several years in janitorial and dishwashing jobs

taught me. None of this technology decreases labor. It just reinforces the role of the work as a passive cog in the social machine.

Even the recreational use of technology—television, computer games, recorded music and so on— is a form of social control. Without even dealing with the social history of these means of entertainment as products of work, one can easily see their role in controlling the activities of people. Through these machines, millions of people take in the ideas and images fed to them, maybe, in the case of computer games, flicking a button or moving a joy-stick in pseudo-interaction with a passively ingested image. None of these passive consumers of entertainment technology are creating their own pleasures, their own interactions, their own lives. None are a threat to authority.

Technology and the civilized environment (urban, suburban and rural) have only one relationship to the creativity of the individual: that of suppressing it. They force it into extremely narrow and confining channels which only allow for the continuing reproduction of society as an ever more controlling and limiting system. In other words, the present society has declared war on unique individuals and their creativity. Within this context, our creative expression must be largely destructive—tearing down the walls, the dams, the channels that constrain us. Destroying the system of social control, including the monstrous technological system and its urban environment which define the non-lives that most people live, is essential to our self-creation, to making our lives our own.


J.L. GILES SC.N.Y

Volume Two

2000

A VIOLENT PROPOSITION:
Against the Weighted Chain of Morality

When dealing with the question of how to battle the social order, there is no place for morality. Anyone who desires a world without exploitation and domination does not share the values of the society that spawned them. Thus, it is necessary to avoid getting drawn into its viewpoint—the dominant viewpoint with all that implies.

The dominant viewpoint in the present era is that of democratic dialogue. All are to come together to discuss their perspectives, argue over their claims, debate their opinions and negotiate compromises guaranteed to enforce the power of those who claim to represent us and to disappoint all parties (except those in power) equally. Isn't our democratic equality a beautiful thing?

Within this viewpoint, revolutionary action ceases to be an activity chosen by individuals in terms of their inclinations, capabilities, situation and desires. Instead it must be reified into a dichotomous choice given moral connotations between violence and nonviolence. For anarchists, who-in theory, at least-determine their own actions on their own terms, this should be a false and meaningless dichotomy.

The central aim of anarchist activity in the present world is the destruction of the state, of capital and of every other institution of power and authority in order to create the possibility of freedom for every individual to fully realize herself as he sees fit. This is not a moral principle, but simply-by definition-putting anarchy into practice. And it is a violent proposition. No apologies should be made about this. I am talking about the destruction of the entire social order—of civilization, if

you will—and such an upheaval is, without question, far more violent than any hurricane or earthquake.

But the significant question is how each individual will act, and that, for anarchists, is determined by each individual in terms of their desires, dreams, capabilities and circumstances-in terms of the life they are trying to create for themselves. In this light, it only makes sense that anarchists would reject morality, humanism and any other external value in deciding how to act. Even efficacy would be rejected as an essential determinant, though, of course, one would try to succeed and would put all of oneself into any self-chosen activity in order to make it as strong as possible. But effectiveness is not the primary question—the desire to attack the institutions of domination and exploitation where one can is.

In this light it becomes clear that we who call ourselves anarchists have no use for dealing with such questions as: "Is property destruction violence or not?"; "Is this an act of legitimate self-defense?" and so on. We have no reason to try to make such artificial distinctions, since our actions are determined precisely by our desire to attack and destroy power. These distinctions between "violence" and "nonviolence" or between "legitimate self-defense" and the violence of attack are based in the hypocritical morality of power that serves no other purpose than to place weighted chains on our ability to act.

Since the demonstrations against the WTO in Seattle, representatives of the mass media have been looking for anarchists to question about violence and property destruction. We will never be able to win over the media or to be presented "fairly" through them. So speaking to them on their terms, using their moral rules as guidelines in determining how we speak about these matters and following their protocol when we speak to them is absurd. The best way to speak to the media on this question is shown by the action of three Italian anarchists—Arturo, Luca and Drew—who beat up a journalist who dared to invade their comrade's funeral.

THE QUESTION OF ORGANIZATION

In developing an insurrectional anarchist projectuality, one is inevitably faced with the question of organization. Such a projectuality is developed through specific projects of action and it is necessary to figure out how one will go about accomplishing these. Recognizing the necessity of individual agency in creating revolution—and further, taking the revolution as one's own realization, as necessary to the development of the freedom to create one's life as one desires—an individual developing such a projectuality will find a spontaneist perspective that merely waits for history to bring the uprising of the masses and denies the efficacy of conscious action aimed at the creation of revolution useless. Those organizations that seek members—unions, parties, federations and the like—and that equate the revolution with the power of their organization subsuming the individual into the group are equally useless to those who struggle for themselves, their ideas and desires.

Rather, as one develops this projectuality through various projects of action, the question of organization is precisely the question of how one develops the tools and relationships one needs and applies anarchist methodologies in a way that allows one to accomplish the desired action. Organization in this sense is not a thing, but a process that can accurately be thought of as the relationship between my project and myself.

An essential component in the development of this projectuality is the acquisition of knowledge—certainly of the tools one learns to use and of the methods one learns to apply, but more significantly, of oneself, of others and of

the surrounding reality. From this relationships of affinity can develop, affinity being precisely that mutual knowledge between individuals that makes it possible for them to act together. It creates relations in which delegation has no place, relations of mutual enhancement—relations that may easily develop an intensity and passion that goes beyond the project in which they originate.

From such relationships, affinity groups can form for the specific task of realizing a particular action. The group will be the gathering together of just those elements necessary for accomplishing the task and will consume itself in the realization of the action. Thus the problem of the organization that subsumes the individual does not develop.

There are many other questions to be explored, discussed and acted upon, questions of the projectual relationship of anarchists to riot situations, to mass uprisings and other situations of large-scale revolt. We are certainly not evangelists or marketers of ideological commodities, so we cannot act the same way in such situations as the various political groups seeking cadres. Those of us who are seeking to create an insurrectional anarchist projectuality because the present world is too small for our desires and dreams, those of us who recognize that the destruction of the present reality is necessary to our self-realization, need to deal with these questions seriously, because for us revolution is not a cause outside ourselves. It is our life, our fierce desire to embrace the fullness of existence that has been denied to us.

POLITICS OR LIFE?

Activism is not rebellion. Activists are specialists in political action, which is to say, they are a type of politician. Their actions are something separated from their lives, either

a hobby or a career to which they dedicate a certain amount of time. The bases of these actions are causes and issues carefully separated from any total analysis or grand vision. In a very real sense, for the activist, whatever promotes the cause, regardless of its personal significance to the activist or its broader significance in terms of the social order, is legitimate. Thus, petitions, voting, delegations before whatever authority, lawsuits, civil disobedience, and the like are all equally acceptable as long as the aim of these actions remains the presentation of demands before the appropriate authority that then takes the decisive action on the matter, leaving the activists to continue their symbolic games. This makes it easy for some activists to embrace a nonviolent morality and turn their backs on those whose lives demand the fullness of struggle, if such a morality fits their limited political agenda.

The decision to rebel against the social order is a decision about the totality of one's life, a decision to refuse precisely that separation which creates politics and activism. Central to this decision is the refusal to let one's life be delegated, the refusal to make demands, because one has chosen to take what one desires, to create what one wants for oneself. The actions one takes are not separate from one's life, but are its passionate outgrowth, springing from the desires and dreams of a free spirit. These actions are aimed at the utter destruction of the social order so that new possibilities of living can be explored by everyone. Thus, they also aim at the destruction of every form of politics including that of the activist. Specialists have always been usurpers, taking an aspect of the fullness of life, draining it of vitality and turning it into a vocation separated from the flow of life. This is precisely what the rebel rejects, what the anarchist aims to destroy, favoring the fullness of life in revolt to the hollow, servile politics of activism.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNISM
THE AIMS OF ANARCHIST REVOLUTION

The anarchist insurrectional project is a revolutionary project, that is to say a project that aims at the destruction of the present society and the creation of new ways of living. The aim of this revolution is the removal of every social limit that prevents individuals from creating their own lives in terms of their own desires and dreams and determining what relations they want to create in order to accomplish this. But such an aim implies other aims as well.

The social system of capital separates most people from the conditions of existence. This compels the vast majority to accept the mediations of work and commodity consumption in order to maintain a minimal existence at the expense of their lives, desires and dreams, of their individuality. The artificial economic scarcity imposed by capital leads to a competition that is often promoted in the United States as the basis of "individualism" in spite of the fact that it creates nearly identical mediocre existences in which life is subsumed in survival.

It is possible even within this social context to take back one's life, the conditions of one's existence, to a limited extent, by choosing to live on the margins as an outlaw. But such a decision can only be a first step if one does not want to isolate oneself. It puts one in the position of being at war with society as it exists. And one's enemies—the masters of this order—have far greater access to the means of existence than the marginalized outlaw. So if this individual revolt is not to fall into the realm of futile gestures, it must move toward a revolutionary perspective.

This perspective develops when one recognizes the necessity of destroying the social order, of utterly demolishing the state and capital. If all individuals are indeed to be free to create their lives and relations as they desire, it is necessary to create a world in which equality of access to the means and conditions of existence is reality. This requires the total destruction of economy—the end of property, commodity exchange and work. Thus we see that the generalized realization of individual freedom goes hand-in-hand with the best aspects of the anarcho-communist ideal and can only be achieved through a revolutionary transformation.

But such a revolution is not a gift granted by abstract History. Here the full significance of individual rebellion shows itself. When we reject every deterministic view of revolution, it becomes clear that the actions of individuals in conscious revolt against the social order are essential for building a revolution. Those individuals who reject all exploitation, who refuse to put up with a world that demands that one buy survival at the expense of one's dreams and desires, at the expense of life lived to the full, seek out the tools and methods to destroy this social order. From this the analyses, projects and actions that are the basis of an insurrectional anarchist projectuality can develop.

TECHNOLOGY AND CLASS STRUGGLE

The developments in technology over the past sixty years—the nuclear industry, cybernetics and related information techniques, biotechnology and genetic engineering—have produced fundamental changes in the social terrain. The methods of exploitation and domination have changed, and for this reason old ideas about the nature of class and class struggle

are not adequate for understanding the present situation. The workerism of the marxists and syndicalists can no longer even be imagined to offer anything useful in developing a revolutionary practice. But simply rejecting the concept of class is not a useful response to this situation either, because in so doing one loses an essential tool for understanding the present reality and how to attack it.

Exploitation not only continues, but has intensified sharply in the wake of the new technology. Cybernetics has permitted the decentralization of production, spreading small units of production across the social terrain. Automation has drastically reduced the number of production workers necessary for any particular manufacturing process. Cybernetics further creates methods for making money without producing anything real, thus allowing capital to expand itself without the expense of labor.

Furthermore, the new technology demands a specialized knowledge that is not available for most people. This knowledge has come to be the real wealth of the ruling class in the present era. Under the old industrial system, one could look at class struggle as the struggle between workers and owners over the means of production. This no longer makes sense. As the new technology advances, the exploited find themselves driven into increasingly precarious positions. The old life-long skilled factory position has been replaced by day labor, service sector jobs, temporary work, unemployment, the black market, illegality, homelessness and prison. This precariousness guarantees that the wall created by the new technolo gy between the exploiters and the exploited remains unbreachable.

But the nature of the technology itself places it beyond the reach of the exploited. Earlier industrial development had as its primary focus the invention of techniques for the mass manufacturing of standardized goods at low cost for high

profit. These new technological developments are not so much aimed at the manufacturing of goods as at the development of means for increasingly thorough and widespread social control and for freeing profit from production. The nuclear industry requires not only specialized knowledge, but also high levels of security that place its development squarely under the control of the state and lead to a military structuring in keeping with its extreme usefulness to the military. Cybernetic technology's ability to process, record, gather and send information nearly instantaneously serves the needs of the state to document and monitor its subjects as well as its need to reduce the real knowledge of those it rules to bits of information-data-hoping, thus, to reduce the real capabilities for understanding of the exploited. Biotechnology gives the state and capital control over the most fundamental processes of life itself; allowing them to decide what sort of plants, animals and—in time—even human beings can exist.

Because these technologies require specialized knowledge and are developed for the purpose of increasing the control of the masters over the rest of humanity even in our daily lives, the exploited class can now best be understood as those excluded from this specialized knowledge and thus from real participation in the functioning of power. The master class is, thus, made up of those included in participation in the functioning of power and the real use of the specialized technological knowledge. Of course these are processes in course, and the borderlines between the included and excluded can, in some cases, be elusive as increasing numbers of people are proletarianized—losing whatever decision-making power over their own conditions of existence they may have had.

It is important to point out that although these new technologies are intended to give the masters control over the excluded and over the material wealth of the earth, they are themselves beyond any human beings control.

Their vastness and the specialization they require combine with the unpredictability of the materials they act upon—atomic and sub-atomic particles, light waves, genes and chromosomes, etc.—to guarantee that no single human being can actually understand completely how they work. This adds a technological aspect to the already existing economic precariousness that most of us suffer from. However, this threat of technological disaster beyond any one's control also serves power in controlling the exploited—the fear of more Chernobyls, genetically engineered monsters or escaped laboratory-made diseases and the like move people to accept the rule of so-called experts who have proven their own limits over and over again. Furthermore, the state—that is responsible for every one of these technological developments through its military—is able to present itself as a check against rampant corporate "abuse" of this technology. So this monstrous, lumbering, uncontrollable juggernaut serves the exploiters very well in maintaining their control over the rest of the population. And what need have they to worry about the possible disasters when their wealth and power has most certainly provided them with contingency plans for their own protection?

Thus, the new technology and the new conditions of exclusion and precariousness it imposes on the exploited undermine the old dream of expropriation of the means of production. This technology—controlling and out of control—cannot serve any truly human purpose and has no place in the development of a world of individuals free to create their lives as they desire. So the illusory utopias of the syndicalists and marxists are of no use to us now. But were they ever? The new technological developments specifically center around control, but all industrial development has taken the necessity of controlling the exploited into account. The factory was created in order to bring producers under one roof to better

regulate their activities; the production line mechanized this regulation; every new technological advance in the workings of the factory brought the time and motions of the worker further under control. Thus, the idea that workers could liberate themselves by taking over the means of production has always been a delusion. It was an understandable delusion when technological processes had the manufacture of goods as their primary aim. Now that their primary aim is so clearly social control, the nature of our real struggle should be clear: the destruction of all systems of control-thus of the state, capital and their technological system, the end of our proletarianized condition and the creation of ourselves as free individuals capable of determining how we will live ourselves. Against this technology our best weapon is that which the exploited have used since the beginning of the industrial era: sabotage.

BEYOND RESISTANCE

While resistance to repression and the advance of capital is, indeed, necessary, it is not a sufficient response to the present situation. Resistance is merely an attempt to create friction in the path of the present order to impede its progress. As such, it is essentially a defensive stance, an attempt to merely hold one's ground. It ends focusing so completely on what one is resisting that one forgets the reason for one's struggle. From a position of relative material weakness—as against the powers that be that are well armed and well positioned—resistance by itself is inherently a losing battle. Focusing on the worst aspects of capital and the state, we simply find ourselves perpetually up against an enemy who keeps shoving us back. Were we in a position where mere resistance could actually stop the progress of the present order, wouldn't it make more sense to use that strength to tear the system down?

But even from a position of relative weakness, attack—destructive action power in the places where it is most vulnerable—is a much more intelligent road to take than that of resistance. Such attacks certainly require some knowledge of the enemy, but do not rise from a focus on the enemy. Rather they rise from the desire to create one's life as one's own, to pursue one's own chosen direction in life without compromise or constraints. This leads one into conflict with the social order, clarifies the nature of the state and capital and exposes its weak points. With this knowledge we can develop our projects of destructive action against the dominant reality.

Freedom is best understood as the expansion of possibilities, the destruction of all limits imposed by this or any other social order. As such, freedom calls for destruction in the very practical sense we have been talking about. Those of us who want to make our lives our own, to grasp the possibilities we have been denied, to smash every limit, have everything against us. For this very reason, we must not hedge our bets. We must be ready to risk all. Resistance, because it is defensive, merely seeking to impede the progress of power, is a hedged bet. If we remain at that level, it means certain defeat in the face of the odds—and, I might add, a most ignoble defeat, the defeat of those content with mere survival. Our revolt must be so fierce that it moves us beyond resistance, that it moves us to risk our all in order to truly live and destroy the social order.

SOME IDEAS ON INSURRECTIONAL ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION

Once one has decided not to put up with being ruled or exploited and therefore to attack the social order based on domination and exploitation, the question of how to go about

this arises. Since those of us who rise up in rebellion cannot let themselves be organized by others without falling under a new form of domination, we need to develop the capacity to organize our own projects and activities—to put the elements together that are necessary for acting projectually in a coherent manner.

Thus, organization, as I'm using the term here, means bringing together the means and relations that allow us to act for ourselves in the world. This starts with the decision to act, the realization that our thirst to have all of our life as our own requires us to fight against the state, capital and all of the structures and institutions through which they maintain control over the conditions of our existence. Such a decision puts one in the position of needing to develop the specific tools that make intelligent action possible. First a thorough analysis of the present conditions of exploitation is necessary. Based on this analysis, we choose specific objectives to aim for and means for achieving these objectives based upon our desires and the ideas that move us. These means, these tools for action must first and foremost include ways of making our objectives, desires and ideas known to others in order to find affinities, others with whom we can create projects of action. Thus, we look to create occasions for encounters and discussion in which similarities and differences are clarified, in which the refusal of false unities allow the real affinities—real knowledge of whether and how we can work together—to develop. These tools allow the projectuality of individuals in revolt to become a force in movement, an element propelling toward the insurrectional break. Since affinity is the basis for the relations we are aiming to use in action, informality is essential—only here can its forms be expressions of real needs and desires.

So our desire to create insurrection moves us to reject all formal organization—all structures based on membership

and the attempt to synthesize the various struggles under one formal leadership—that of the organization. These structures for synthesis share a few common traits. They have a formal theoretical basis, a series of doctrines to which all members are expected to adhere. Because such groups are seeking numbers this basis tends to be on the lowest common denominator—a set of simplistic statements with no depth of analysis and with a dogmatic tendency that militates against deep analysis. They also have a formal practical orientation—a specific mode of acting by which the group as a whole determines what they will do. The necessity such groups feel to synthesize the various struggle under their direction—to the extent they succeed—leads to a formalization and ritualization of the struggles undermining creativity and imagination and turning the various struggles into mere tools for the promotion of the organization. From all of this it becomes clear, that whatever claims such an organization may make about its desire for insurrection and revolution, in fact, its first aim is to increase membership. It is important to realize that this problem can exist even when no structures have been created. When anarchism promotes itself in an evangelistic manner, it is clear that a formal theoretical basis has imposed its rigidity on the fluidity of ideas necessary for developing real analyses. In such a situation, the practical orientation—the modes of action also become formalized—one need only look at the ritualized confrontations by which so many anarchists strive to get their message across. The only purpose that this apparently informal formalization serves is to try to convince the various people in struggle that they should call themselves anarchists—that is, to synthesize the struggles under the leadership of the black flag. In other words to gain numbers of members for this formal non-organization. Dealing with the media to explain who anarchists are seems to enforce this way of interacting with the other exploited in struggle, because it reinforces the

separation of anarchists from the rest of those exploited by this society and leaves the impression that the anarchists have some special understanding of things that makes them the de facto vanguard of the revolution.

So for the purpose of creating our insurrectional project we want to organize informally: without a formal theoretical basis so that ideas and analyses can be developed fluidly in a way that allows us to understand the present and act against it and without a formal practical orientation so that we can act with an intelligent projectual spontaneity and creativity. A significant aspect of this informal organization would be a network of like-minded people. This network would base itself on a reciprocal knowledge of each other which requires honest, straightforward discussions of ideas, analyses and aims. Complete agreement would not be necessary, but a real understanding of differences would. The aim of this network would not be the recruitment of members—it would not be a membership organization—but rather developing methods for intervening in various struggles in an insurrectional manner, and coordinating such interventions. The basis for participation would be affinity—meaning the capacity to act together. This capacity stems from knowing where to find each other and studying and analyzing the social situation together in order to move to action together. Since there is no formal organization to join, this network would only grow on the basis of a real affinity of ideas and practice. This informal network would consist of the tools we develop for the discussion of social analyses and the methods for intervening in struggles that we create.

This network is basically a way for individuals and small groups to coordinate their struggles. The real point of action is the affinity group. An affinity group is an informal, temporary group based on affinity—that is real knowledge of each other—that comes together to accomplish a specific aim. Affinity

develops through a deepening knowledge of each other: knowledge of how the other thinks about social problems and of the methods of intervention they consider appropriate. Real affinity cannot be based on a lowest common denominator, but must include a real understanding of differences as well as similarities between those involved, because it is in the knowledge of our difference that we can discover how we can really act together. Since the affinity group comes together for a specific circumscribed aim, it is a temporary formation—one that ceases to exist once the aim is accomplished. Thus it remains informal, without membership.

With this informal basis, once we recognize that our own freedom will remain impoverished as long as the masters continue to control the conditions under which most people exist, depriving us of the ability to freely determine our own lives, we recognize that our own liberation depends on intervention in the struggles of the exploited classes as a whole. Our involvement is not one of evangelism—the propagandistic method would place us on the same level as political movements, and we are not politicians or activists, but individuals who want our lives back and therefore take action for ourselves with others. Thus, we do not propose any specific anarchist organization for the exploited to join, nor a doctrine to put faith in. Rather we seek to link our specific struggle as anarchists to that of the rest of the exploited by encouraging self-organization, self-determination, the refusal of delegation and of any sort of negotiation, accommodation or compromise with power, and a practice based on direct action and the necessity of attack against the structures of power and control. The point is to encourage and participate in specific attacks against specific aspects of the state, capital and the various structures and apparati of control. Since our purpose is to struggle against our own exploitation with other exploited people, certainly with the aim of projecting toward

insurrection, there can be no guaranteeing of any results—with no organization striving to gain members, we can't look for an increase in numbers. There is no way to know the end. But though we have no guarantees, no certainty of accomplishing our aim, success is not the primary reason for our struggle. The primary reason is that not to act is the guaranteed defeat of an empty and meaningless existence. To act to take our lives back is to already regain them on the terrain of struggle, to already become the creator of one's own existence, even if in constant battle with a monstrous order determined to crush us.

INSTRUMENTAL LOGIC AND ANARCHIST PRINCIPLES

"Between tactical dogma and strategic expectations I choose neither the one nor the other, for I would be transforming anarchism, which for me is an ethic, a way of seeing and living life, into an ideal to be realized at any cost, whereas there can be no separation between theory and practice…
"I believe that the anarchist choice cannot be subordinated to future events but that it must during its actual course bear the mark of difference, pleasure, dignity."
—Massimo Passamani

Fairly frequently in anarchist circles, one will hear calls for us to be more effective, to act more strategically. Undoubtedly, there is a place for such calls, particularly when there seems to be so much confusion about a revolutionary anarchist project is and so little creative intelligence aimed at creating one. But most of the time in these calls for strategy and effectiveness the significance of choosing to be an anarchist and the meaning of an insurrectional project get lost precisely because of the lack of a clear understanding of what these would mean in our

lives. Thus, such calls often end up producing an instrumental logic that parallels that of capitalism and the state and can even reach the point where some anarchists call for voting or writing letters petitioning congress people, judges and other authorities to take action for us. It is therefore necessary to clarify some basic principles of anarchist thought and practice and, thus, lay the foundation for an anarchist insurrectional project.

While the basic meaning of anarchy is the simple negation of all rule, the positive aim would be the freedom of each individual to determine how she will live directly through his own activity in relation with those with whom she chooses to interact and create the conditions of life. Such a vision demands a practice in which that which is envisioned already exists. Thus, before considering strategy, tactics and effectiveness, we want to develop a methodology by which to create our lives and struggles in terms of this vision. Since this vision is one of the destruction of all rule and the development of self-determined lives and relationships, the methodology of our struggle needs to reject compromise and negotiation with power as well as the delegation of our ability to act to any so-called representative, leader or organization. Thus, the basic elements of an insurrectional and anarchist methodology would include: direct action—acting directly to achieve the aim desired rather than making demands to an authority to act in one's place; autonomy—the refusal to allow any formal organization with its prescribed ideology and program of action to determine how one will struggle, but rather organizing one's activities informally with others who choose to act together to accomplish their aims; attack—the refusal of any compromise, mediation or accommodation with those in power, always recognizing them as the enemies of self-determination and their offers of negotiation as ploys to undermine revolt. This methodology offers no guarantees that large-scale insurrection will develop

or succeed, but it does guarantee that any struggle carried out this way is self-determined, the activity of those in struggle and not of their self-proclaimed leaders and representatives. Those who take this as a basis for their activity in the world will be creating their lives for themselves—in struggle against the world as it is and against all odds. When this methodology is used in constant struggle against specific concrete aspects of power, it is the basis for developing a project aimed at building an anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist insurrection.

So it is only on the basis of such a clear anarchist vision and the development of a methodology that reflects this vision, that questions of tactics, strategy and effectiveness have meaning. The various methods of petition and negotiation—letters and phone calls to representatives (of power), litigation, symbolic appeals to the conscience of the powerful, etc.—may, indeed, be effective in "freeing" a particular prisoner, stopping a particular development, protecting a particular 100 acres of forest or gaining a particular civil right, but by delegating the actual decisions to the masters of this world, these methods undermine self-determination. Our aim is the destruction of a social order in which prisons exist and spread the atmosphere of imprisonment throughout the social terrain, in which the necessity for economic expansion has precedence over the health of the planet and joy in life, in which the only options offered to us are those which enhance power and capital at our expense, in which one can only find freedom in a struggle that defies all odds against the entire order of existence that has been imposed on us. Effective action toward this aim is action that defines itself in terms of our desire to determine our existence for ourselves here and now. Anything else will only reinforce power, and from the standpoint of insurrectional anarchist practice that is not only ineffective and poor strategy, but immediately self-defeating in the strongest sense of that term.

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND THE DIGITALIZATION OF LIFE

I have contended for years that technology is not neutral, that it carries within itself the ideology of the ruling forms of domination and exploitation for which it is created. If this has not been obvious in earlier technological developments, the growth of biotechnology makes this clear. Following the methodology of modern science, which strives to break everything down into its smallest components in a supposed attempt to "understand" it, biotechnology undermines the integrity of the individual and the possibility of free interaction, instead enforcing a mechanized view of life and a dependence on "experts" to keep the mechanisms functioning.

From its origin, modern science has viewed the universe as a vast machine. In such a mechanistic perspective, the method for achieving an understanding of how the universe functions is to break it down into its parts and study them in isolation. Thus, the scientific method has never been merely the empirical method—the method of observation. Empirical observation had to be confirmed in the isolation of the laboratory through controlled experimentation.

The mechanistic view of the universe met the needs of capitalist development quite well. As capitalism developed along with the technological means through which it controlled the exploited classes and the materials of the earth, the scientific understanding of the universal machine changed as well, providing an ideological justification for the developing methods of exploitation and domination. While some have tried to pass off the (now almost a century old) "new" scientific perspectives of relativity and quantum physics as an end to

the mechanistic perspective and an opening to "mysticism" in science, it would be more accurate to say that Newtonian mechanicism has given way to a cybernetic mechanicism—the universe transformed into a mathematical construct made up of bits of information, of quanta. (It is worth noting that most, if not all, sub-atomic particles are, in fact, only mathematical equations that seem to solve a particular problem and may cause a blip on the screen of a machine that serves no other purpose than to make such blips in a gigantic laboratory.) Here science completely discounts observation to the point of equating the alleged results of "mental experiments" (and now computerized simulations as well) with those of material experiments. The concrete world we experience is nothing. The world of data, of bits of information, is everything—it is reality.

Biotechnology fits perfectly into this cybernetic view of the universe. The science of genetics has done to life what atomic and sub-atomic physics did to the universe—broken it down into data, bits of interchangeable information. And just as in the "new" physics, the material universe as we experience it ceases to be of importance except as a vehicle for the interaction of quanta, so in the genetic perspective, the individual living being and its relation to its environment are of no importance in themselves. They are merely vehicles for genetic information, which comes to be seen as the essence of life, undermining individuality, vitality, free relationship and holistic coherence.

In fact, what this perspective does is digitalize life. Our being is no longer thought of as consisting of our body, our mind, our passions, our desires, our actions our choices, our desires and our relations in a unique dance through the world, but rather as a series of interchangeable bio-bits with a potential for being adjusted through manipulation by experts.

The social framework for this perspective had already

been set in motion long before the "discovery" of DNA gave it the defined material for the information bits. Capitalist development, particularly in the last half of the 20th century, turned the citizen (already a part of the apparatus of the nation-state) into a producer-consumer, basically interchangeable with all others form the point of view of the social order. The integrity of the individual had already been severely undermined to serve the needs of the social machine. Is it then such a great step to transforming the individual into nothing more than a sum of genetic parts that are interchangeable with the part of any other "living" tool?

The earliest modern scientists were mainly devout christians. When they imagined the machine of the universe, it was as a machine manufactured by god with a purpose beyond itself. Scientists have long since left the conception of higher purpose behind. The cybernetic universe serves no other purpose than that of maintaining itself in order to maintain the flow of bits of information. What this means on a practical social level is that each and every entity exists for the sole purpose of maintaining the present social order. Each individual is a tool for this purpose, and these tools can be adjusted as necessary to maintain a flow of information—which is to say profits—that allo ws this society to continue.

Of course, however degraded, individuals still exist. The promoters of biotechnology are forced to convince us of its benefits. If the idea of biotechnology as a means for fighting world hunger has lost all credibility in the face of such horrors as the terminator technology and the patenting of genetic materials, in the realm of medicine, biotechnology has managed to present a much more benign face. Genetic hypotheses of the origins of cancer, alcoholism, schizophrenia, drug addiction and increasing numbers of other diseases, disorders and behaviors are now accepted as commonplaces in spite of the fact that real evidence for this nearly non-existence,

most of it based on conjecture. Yet the media propaganda works, producing a willingness on the part of many to accept "good" medical use of biotechnology, that is, a willingness to be treated as a cybernetic machine that can be made to function more precisely through the manipulation of bits of information.

The potential horrors of biotechnology—genetic pollution, the escape of genetically engineered organisms into the environment, the totalitarian use of cloning—only call for regulation of this technological system, to prevent its "bad" use. But if it is the fundamental ideology behind this technology that we question, its degradation of individual living beings into mechanisms for the flow of bits of information, then reform becomes useless. If we are to save the dignity of the individual, the beauty of life, the wonder of the universe, then we must act to destroy this technology and the social system that produces it. And we cannot forget that biotechnology is simply the latest, most sophisticated version of this degrading ideology which has been inherent in industrial technological systems—and in domestication itself—from the beginning. For those of us for whom life is not mere survival, for whom wonder, beauty, passion and joy are the essence of existence, for whom the uniqueness of each living being is the basis for a world of free relating, the task is tremendous: the destruction of the digitalized existence that has been imposed upon us and the creation anew each day of ourselves as unique and amazing beings in relation with those we love.

THE ECONOMY OF DISASTER

"…the most stupefying characteristic of today's society is its ability to make 'daily comfort' exist a hand's breadth away from catastrophe."

In the middle of October in eastern Kentucky, a coal mine pond gave way, releasing 200 million gallons of sludge into streams, killing fish, washing away roads and bridges and fouling the water supply. The tar-like sludge spread into the Ohio River. But such disasters are not so uncommon. One need only consider the cyanide spill that happened in Romania at the end of January spreading as far as Yugoslavia and leaving a few hundred tons of dead fish (not to mention birds, otters and other creatures) in its wake, or the spillage of radio-active material at Tokaimura, Japan that caused major environmental damage for a radius of several miles around it in October of 1999. And of course, we cannot forget Bhopal or Chernobyl. But these are the most spectacular disasters, the ones that could not be made invisible (though even disasters of this sort may, in time, become so common that they cease to be news—consider that there 45 coal mine ponds that were said to be at higher risk of failure than the one that collapsed in October). Disaster is, in fact an ongoing aspect of our present existence. The estuary at the mouth of the Colorado River is quickly dying, most likely due to the effects of hydro-electric dams. Chemical pollution has spread death from the mouth of the Mississippi River well into the Gulf of Mexico. The ozone layer disappears along with the forests and the plankton that feed it. And the melting of the polar ice caps has forced scientists to admit to the reality of global warming. When one adds to this the intentional disasters

caused by the attempts of the great powers to teach the lesser powers the meaning of democracy by bombing the shit out of the powerless, it is clear that life in the present is always lived on the edge of disaster.

When the litany of disasters that surrounds us is sung, it is easy to feel that we are dealing with the inevitable, with an unavoidable fate. But this is not the case. Every one of the disasters described above can be traced to the functioning of specific social institutions and the decisions of the people who hold power in them. As has been said many times, there are people who make these decisions and they have names and addresses.

They also share a particular social position. As the rulers of this social order, they benefit from it in terms of power and economic wealth. (That they do so at the expense of their individuality and any real enjoyment of life does not decrease their responsibility for the present existence.) While some of the disastrous effects of their decisions may have taken them by surprise, it cannot be honestly said that they acted blindly. After all, these are the same people who had no problem with showering a small predominately agricultural country with herbicide in an attempt to destroy its economy. The environment is not their concern; power and economic expansion are.

When capitalism developed the technological system ideal for its expansion, the industrial system that began in the shipping industries which then provided the resources for developing the manufacturing industries, the door was opened to a world of daily misery and ongoing disaster. Whether it be the genocide against indigenous people who did not adapt quickly enough to their enslavement to the needs of capital, the illnesses and injuries that the regime of work imposes on workers, the increasing precariousness that faces everyone who is not of the ruling class, misery is the order of the day in this society.

To fully understand why this is, it is necessary to realize that capitalism thrives on crisis. Its order is an order of crisis management. For the rulers of the social order this is not a problem. They are well protected from the consequences of the crises that they sometimes quite intentionally induce. Those at the bottom, those who have been excluded from any real control over the circumstances in which they live, suffer the consequences of this system.

The industrial system, which is so necessary to the expansion of capital, has been an environmental disaster from the beginning, offering William Blake some of his most frightening poetic images. The famous London fog of the 19th century was, in fact, industrial smog which accompanied high rates of tuberculosis among the poorer classes. Today, the toxification of the environment combines with the stress of daily survival to create cancer, heart disease, immune system breakdown and increasing levels of mental distress and disorder from which those in power seek to protect themselves with medical care that most of us could never afford—and which plays its own role in the toxification of this world.

Capitalism will not provide a solution for the disasters it causes. It is a system of stop-gap measures, and, increasingly, as the new technologies come to the fore, a system of tinkering with ever tinier atomized bits. Unfortunately, in the face of economic precariousness and environmental disaster, survival tends to take precedence over life and joy. And in this way, the rule of capital penetrates even into our minds, as we find ourselves succumbing to the use of stop-gap measures, of the methods of crisis management, in an attempt to guarantee our—and the earth's—survival. Thus, the strange phenomenon some of those who call themselves anarchists using litigation, petition, even the electoral process in the attempt to save a patch of forest, stop a particular development or prevent the

destruction of an indigenous culture. The problem is not that people struggle for these specific aims, but that in desperation they lay aside their ideals, their desires and their dreams, and use methods of struggle that only reinforce the economy of disaster that rules existence today.

The struggle against this present existence in which misery and disaster are the norm must, in order to have a chance, base itself in our desire to live full, passionate lives, on the joyful intensity we create in our lives in spite of the existence imposed on us. Only then can our struggle move beyond the careful measurements of crisis management, beyond the stop-gap measures for guaranteeing survival at the expense of life that merely aid capitalism in maintaining and expanding its rule, instead embracing those methods of struggle that move toward insurrection, toward revolution, toward the unknown. Our present existence is a toxic prison. There is no way to know what lies beyond the walls. But here we know we are being killed and this can only end when our love of life moves us to tear down the walls.

ON THE NECESSITY OF SOCIAL STRUGGLE

The changes occurring in the way capital functions today present a difficult challenge to all of us who reject and seek to destroy the present social order. We are living in a world in which existence is increasingly precarious, in which possibilities for a relatively autonomous existence are narrowing, in which our physical and mental beings are increasingly attacked by the poisons this system spews out, and in which the democratic state no longer feels the need to disguise what a state is but rather complacently garners citizens' support for the most repressive measures through

propaganda about "violent crime" and "terrorism". To dream of finding individual freedom outside of the terrain of social struggle—of class conflict—is not adequate. Capital has permeated all but the tiniest crevasses of the globe and its poisons pollute even these. Our so-called "autonomous zones" are nothing more than marginal projects for survival within the present order—possibly necessary in the present precarious situation, but by no means a sufficient means for confronting the reality that surrounds us with the rebellious spirit that springs from our desire for a full and vibrant existence. Now individual freedom can only exist in the struggle to destroy the present social order—a struggle that is social, that involves the violent confrontation between those who are exploited and ruled and those control the conditions of our existence—because only in this context of struggle do our decisions and actions become one, ceasing to be a choice among the options offered by this society and becoming rather our own self-determined projects.

In this light, all easy answers must be held suspect. Whether it be so-called "revolutionary gardening" or "anarchist" free food distribution, the uncritical veneration of the EZLN or of the recent mass demonstrations against global capitalism, the acceptance of the official dogmas about AIDS or about mental illness (and the consequent acceptance of medical expertise), the simplistic generalizations about gender and sexuality put forth in so much feminist ideology and the equally unanalyzed (and often subtly racist) conceptions of race many "anti-racists" embrace. Every easy answer silences the questioning essential to revolutionary struggle and individual freedom and leaves us impotent before the present horrors. If those of us who want to bring the state, capital and the entirety of this civilization down are to be strong in our attack, we will have to turn a pitiless and savage eye of critique on all the givens and commonplaces not

only of the world of power, but also of the so-called radical movements that have failed to give us the powerful weapons we essential to our project of destroying this order. We can expect no saviors to come save us, no miracles to drop our revolution from the sky, no panaceas or wonder drugs to cure our ailing world. It is up to us to develop our tools, to hone our weapons, to create a revolt that is strong, intelligent and fierce. In the face of the present reality anything less becomes a prop for the present toxic reality.

THE FULLNESS OF LIFE WITHOUT MEASURE

The reasons for eradicating every form of rule can be enumerated repeatedly to infinity without inspiring a single act of revolt. The fact that this civilization, built on domination and exploitation, is really just a clock-work march toward death could just easily move one to give up or fall into the logic of emergency that so easily leads to the acceptance of band-aid measures and dependence on the experts of the ruling order. All the lists of the excesses of exploitation, of environmental destruction, of specific acts of repression and so on remain in the realm of the quantitative, and thus continue to be based in the methodology and mentality of the economy and the state. Therefore, they provide a fine basis for the specializations of the various leftist movements seeking a more just economy, a more democratic political order, a mere change in institutional structures, but the anarchist impulse, the hatred of every form of rule, the urge to destroy the totality of a civilization based on exploitation and domination clearly has its origin elsewhere.

In the heart of a riot one can catch a glimpse of the spirit of revolt without a price. It is there in the glee of the looter who,

when asked how she felt about stealing, replied, "Nobody's stealing. It's all free today." It is there in the festive atmosphere in the midst of battle with the forces of order. Here the economy has been eclipsed. The self-sacrifice and veneration of survival that define the leftist schemes of participatory democracy and counter-institutions to guarantee that the revolution happens with as little upheaval of people's daily lives as possible are nowhere to be seen. Life has broken out in its fullness for a moment, provoked most often by shared rage, and the rioters are willing to risk their all at that moment, not out of a sense of sacrifice to any cause, but in order to embrace the quality of a moment of real life. However, in the moment of the riot this is not a conscious and willful decision, but a spontaneous irruption that will burn itself out if it doesn't become more focused and conscious, if it doesn't begin to transform itself into an insurrection against the present existence.

What happens in a riot that creates the festive atmosphere is the temporary opening of possibilities that do not normally exist within the present social reality. That reality has momentarily broken down and the love of life, the desire for intense and passionate existence, has rushed in. It is a realm of dream in which everything seems possible, in which rage has mixed with joy, in which the desire for revenge has blended with the desire for a completely different way of life. And such dreams can only exist in revolt against the ruled and quantified survival imposed by the social order.

The anarchist (and here I do not mean that brand of leftist whose careful calculations have led them to the ideological stance against authoritarianism and statism along with all the "isms" on their revolutionary balance sheets) makes a conscious decision to embrace this fullness of life against all odds, to refuse to count the cost, choosing rather to rise up against economy in all its forms. She will not sacrifice his life—not even for the grandest cause—but will rather gamble

it joyfully on the chance that all of life might be transformed in accordance with her dreams.

If not based on such a decision, anarchism is merely another political ideology. But starting from this choice to grasp life in all its fullness, our projects of revolt can be carried out with a passionate intelligence capable of analyzing the world and our activity in it on the basis of our desire to be the creators of our own existence. This passionate intelligence appears in riots, but it only develops as a tool for revolution when coupled to a projectual will. From this willful joy in life, this willingness to bet one's life against all odds in hope of total freedom, the hatred of all rule is born, and with it the project of destroying this horrific civilization.

A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

One hears a lot of talk about privilege in anarchist circles these days. "Male privilege", "white-skin privilege", "first-world privilege' and similar phrases come up regularly in discussion, but with no real analysis to back them up, as if everyone should understand exactly what is meant. And, indeed, it is not so difficult to figure out what is meant by these phrases. Their clear implication is that if the oppression and exploitation one suffers in this society is not as intense as that which another suffers, then one is privileged relative to that other person. But such a conception of privilege is useless from an anarchist and revolutionary perspective. It only has meaning in relation to the reformist concept of equality before the law, which is always equality of exploitation and oppression. For those of us who have no interest in rights, but rather want the freedom to determine our own lives and so find the only equality worth pursuing to be equality of access to all that is necessary for determining the conditions of our existence—that is, for

those of us for whom the destruction of the social order and the revolutionary transformation of reality are the essential first steps toward making our lives our own—a very different concept of privilege must be developed.

We live in a class society. This has been true since the accumulation of wealth and power into a few hands gave rise to the state and capital. The few who rule determine the conditions under which everyone exists, institutionalizing social relations that maintain and expand their control over wealth and power. The ruling class structures these relations in such a way that the survival of the exploited classes depends upon their continued participation in the reproduction of these relationships, thus guaranteeing the continuation of class society. Thus, it can be said that the ruling class structures social relationships in such a way that the continued reproduction of society will always privilege the ruling class and its needs. In any class society—thus, in any society in which the state and the economy exist—only the ruling class can be truly said to have privilege.

But the ruling class does not impose itself upon a passive populace. The history of class society is always the history of class struggle, the history of the exploited trying to take their lives and the social conditions under which they exist back in order to determine them for themselves. Thus, it is in the interest of the ruling class to structure social relations in such a way as to create divisions within the exploited classes that cloud their understanding of the nature of their struggle and of their enemy. The ruling class accomplishes this through various institutions, identities and ideologies such as nation, race, gender, occupation, sexual preference and so on. It is not hard to see how the ruling class uses these structures for its ends. It grants people in specific social categories particular "privileges" defined in terms of that category. But being granted a privilege by those who define your life on their terms is not the same thing as having privilege. This becomes especially clear when

anyone who is not of the ruling class steps out of line. Their so-called privileges can quickly disappear.

Furthermore, these "privileges" granted by the ruling order to people in certain social categories among the exploited actually do amount to nothing more than a lessening of the intensity of exploitation and oppression experienced by these people relative to others. Thus, men are less likely to be sexually harassed and assaulted than women and tend to receive greater compensation for the same level of exploitation at the job. White people are less likely to be harassed by cops or to be charged with felonies for victimless crimes and sentenced to years in prison than non-white people and find it easier to get a job. Heterosexuals generally do not have to worry about being beaten or ostracized because of their sexual preference. The list could go on, but I think the point is clear. All of these so-called privileges are nothing more than a minimal easing of the conditions of exploitation experienced by people in these specific social categories. They are intended to convince these people that they have more in common with their exploiters than with those not granted the same "privileges" and to convince the others that their real enemy is not the ruling class, but rather those granted a less intense level of exploitation.

In this light, moralistic calls to recognize one's own privilege and give it up are meaningless. They serve no purpose in the creation of a revolutionary project aimed at the destruction of all rule. As we have seen, the so-called privileges enumerated in the mea culpas of guilt ridden radicals are really nothing more than means for constructing social identities that serve the ruling class by producing artificial divisions among those they exploit. So if we want to move the revolutionary project of destroying all rule and privilege forward, then our task is not to give up some phantom privilege that has never really been our own, but to expose and move beyond the artificial identities that smother our individuality and cripple us in our

battle against the ruling order. Since only the ruling class truly has privilege, the destruction of privilege will only occur when we destroy all rule.

THOUGHTS ON ALIENATION

Alienation is a concept frequently talked about in anarchist circles. Clearly, domination and exploitation can only develop in conjunction with alienation, so such discussion is important. But it is necessary to focus this discussion in order to make it useful to the anarchist project of destroying the present order and creating new ways of living.

I have always said that the revolt against the present order of things originates in the individual desire to create one's life as one sees fit. This does not contradict the necessity for class struggle or the desire for communism, but rather provides a basis for clarifying the methods for carrying out this revolutionary project. In terms of the present matter, it provides a basis for understanding alienation and it s relationship to domination and exploitation.

When I talk about alienation, I am talking about a social process through which the institutions of social reproduction wrest our creative energy, our capacity to determine the conditions of our existence from us, placing their alienated form (not just as labor power, but as social roles of all sorts as well) at the service of the ruling order. This social process divides society into classes-the exploited whose capacity to create their lives as they see fit has been taken from them and the exploiters who benefit from this separation by accumulating and controlling the alienated energy in order to reproduce the current society and their own role as its rulers. The struggle of the exploited against the exploiting class thus finds its aim and method in the individual's struggle to realize

herself by reappropriating her creative energy, his capacity to determine his life as she sees fit. This struggle must ultimately become collective, but there is no need to wait for the rising of the multitudes in order to begin.

But I often hear the word alienation used in a much more general way. One hears of our alienation from nature, from others and from ourselves. These forms of alienation are not without their basis. When our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence is taken from us, we become dependent on the institutions of domination. This situation forces us to separate from environments that are not controlled, environments that have not been institutionalized, and frequently places us into adversarial relationships with these environments. It also forces us to carry out activities that have no immediate relationship to our needs, desires and passions and to enter into relationships the content of which has been determined beforehand by the requirements of the social order.

But often when these latter forms of alienation are discussed, their social basis is forgotten. Rather than finding their source in the alienation of the individual's creative capacities for living which puts them into the service of the dominant social order, these forms are instead traced to the alleged alienation of the individual from a greater whole, an imagined original unity. This idealist version of alienation moves it from the social into the metaphysical. In this form, it may be interesting on a philosophical level, but offers little or nothing for the development of an insurrectional anarchist theory and practice. In fact, it could prove detrimental, making concepts so murky that clarity gets lost.

Consider, for example, the way some primitivists use the word "civilization". This enemy that we are to destroy becomes as nebulous as the original Oneness, Wild Nature or whatever other reified concept one may use to idealize and unify the

uncivilized state. The struggle then ceases to be social in nature and begins to take on mystical and psychological connotations. One must free oneself of the civilized mindset in order to reconnect with the Oneness of Wild Nature. Revolution is seen as a return to a past Eden rather than a rupture with the present aimed at the liberation from all constraints and the opening of possibilities.

But civilization is not essentially a mindset, a particular ideological system or a fall from Eden. It is something far more concrete: an ensemble of intertwined institutions-the state, the economy, technological systems, religion, the family, the city, etc.-that work together to precisely to predetermine the conditions under which we exist, thus alienating our capacity to determine our own lives, producing and reproducing social relations of domination and exploitation. Thus, the revolutionary destruction of civilization would simply be the revolutionary destruction of the institutions through which domination and exploitation are maintained. It would not be a return to a supposed Eden or some alleged original Oneness of being. In fact, it would offer no guarantees. It would simply put the capacity to determine our lives back into our own hands-from there it would be up to us to decide what we would do with it.

Naturalizing alienation, casting it in a metaphysical form as the disintegration of an original Oneness, with the consequent vision of a return to an Eden that never was, offers nothing to the insurrectional project. When we recognize that the fundamental form of alienation with which we have to contend is the theft of our capacity to create our live as we desire, it becomes clear that our struggle itself must be where we begin to steal it back by refusing every attempt to institutionalize the struggle, by acting directly and autonomously to destroy the present social order.

COUNTERING INSTITUTIONS

The method one proposes for carrying out the struggle against the present order reflects the sort of existence one desires. The anarchist project has its origin in the desire of individuals to create their lives for themselves, on the basis of their own passions, inclinations and capacities. This aspiration becomes insurrectional when it confronts the institutions that presently define social relationships and determine the conditions of existence and the individual recognizes the necessity of destroying these institutions in order to realize this desire.

The dream of unfettered, self-determined life is the positive impulse that moves us to rebel. But it is not a blueprint for a new social order. It does not provide the answers in advance, but rather raises questions and draws us into the unknown. It presents us with the task of destroying our prison so that we can discover what lies beyond its walls.

Some anarchists find such a dream inadequate. They desire certainties, clear visions and answers. They come up with plans, schemes, programs and blueprints of the new society—usually based on models from some real or imagined past. But perhaps the proposal that I find the strangest is the one that calls us to start creating counter-institutions now to replace the institutions of domination.

The contention behind this proposal is that the institutions through which domination is maintained also serve essential functions for the maintenance of social life. Since the mechanisms of social life must not be interrupted, it is necessary to put new "non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian" institutions in place to take over these functions. Should we fail to do so, we would be leaving the field open for new form of domination to

arise, one that may be even worse than the present form. This is what we are told.

And the questions are raised: "With what shall we replace the state?", "With what shall we replace capitalism?" It amazes me when anarchists ask such questions with a straight face. Does one replace the hated chains which held one captive? Does one rebuild the burnt-down prison from which one has escaped? But the proponents of counter-institutions have more foresight than this. They would have us forge the new chains and build the new prisons now in order to avoid the encounter with the unknown, with a wild world that may make our lives unpredictable. At least this new prison would be self-managed.

The actual counter-institutions that have been created are rarely anything more than alternative businesses, charities, NGO's and the like. They offer no challenge to the present social order, but integrate quite well into its framework becoming dependent upon it. Certainly, anarchist bookshops, infoshops and publishers can be useful tools, but they are hardly models for a world in which every individual is free to determine her life as she sees fit with full access to all he needs to do so since they have little choice but to comply with the requirements of the economy. Undoubtedly, these counter-institutions would fall with the collapse of the social order upon which they depend.

From an anarchist perspective, perhaps the most absurd of the counter-institutional proposals is one that originates in libertarian municipalism, the proposal for the creation of institutions for directly democratic decision-making. It seems to me that the institutionalization of decision-making is the basic description of socio-political authority. The power of decision is taken from the individual and placed into the hands of the institution representing society. This institution then decides for the individual, requiring that the individual abide

by that decision. A structure of this sort is already an authority, a government. When it encounters self-willed individuals who refuse to abide by its decisions, would it refrain from creating further institutions to enforce its decisions—institutions which would constitute a state? In any case, there is nothing anarchist about this proposal; it is inherently authoritarian.

While in practice the conception of counter-institutions has only succeeded in producing mirror images of mainstream institutions, its theoretical foundation is a fallacy. The assumption that the institutions of domination serve any necessary social function that must be continued when they are destroyed is groundless as the inability of the proponents of counter-institutions to describe these functions shows. The fundamental function of every institution—what makes it an institution rather than a project, an activity, a free relationship—is the alienation of the creative energy of individuals and their capacity to grasp the conditions of their existence in order to take control of them and channel them into the reproduction of the social order and so of domination and exploitation. It has been said many times, but I will say it again: it is our activity that creates the conditions of our existence. Institutions simply take control of this activity to guarantee the continuation of that which is.

The idea that counter-institutions would function in a significantly different way is an illusion already exposed by the proponents of this method themselves when they tell us that the mechanisms of social life must not be interrupted. The very existence of a social life that can be considered as mechanistic originates in the alienation of our creative energy and our capacities. If each of us is to become the creator of his own existence in association with whom she chooses, then social life must cease to be a mechanism into which we are fitted like gears or cogs. It is necessary that we reappropriate our creative energy and the conditions of our existence so that

we can carry out essential social functions in terms of our desires not in terms of social reproduction—society is only useful as a tool for the full realization of our lives. In itself, it has no value.

In this light, it should be clear that the revolution toward which we anarchists make our efforts would be far more than a mere interruption of the mechanisms of social life. It would aim to destroy these mechanisms in order to free social life from a mechanistic, instrumentalist framework, to transform it into a tool for individual realization. Such a project not only has no need for institutions; it is by its nature anti-institutional. It requires a fluidity that corresponds to our passions and desires, to our individuality. There could not be a blueprint for such a world; there couldn't even be an outline. Any institution would be its enemy, the potential framework in which a new authority could arise.

So the argument for counter-institutions has gotten it backwards. Certainly, a disruption of the social order that opens every possibility is a gamble. No one would claim otherwise. Among the possibilities opened by an insurrectionary break is that of the return of domination. But providing such a potential power with the tools it would need to establish itself, institutional structures for defining and controlling social relationships, would only make their task easier. Institutions do not prevent domination; indomitable individuals do.

So the question is not that of what structures to create to replace those we destroy, but of how to go about destroying the present social order in such a way that we transform ourselves into indomitable individuals capable of creating and transforming fluid relationships reflective of our dreams and aspirations.

We all have a great capacity for self-organization. It is expressed every day as we go about our life, though in a form that is constrained to follow the limiting channels of the

institutions that surround us. Proposals for counter-institutions and blueprints defining the new society in advance are simply more constraining channels, games of politicians looking for adherents to their cause. Such programs could only produce a society as alienated as the present one where the lives of individuals have already been defined for them before they even start living. Thus, in these kinds of proposals, the world that I see as the motivating force of anarchist struggle, the world in which every individual can create her life as he sees fit, has already been suppresses and the framework for new forms of domination set in place.

If, rather than starting from our fear of social rupture, our fear of upheaval, our fear of the unknown, we start from our dreams and aspirations and our capacity for self-organization, the need for programs, institutions and blueprints disappears. It becomes clear that what is necessary is revolt, insurrection, the destruction of the institutions that dominate our lives, or to put it more clearly, self-organized attacks against the institutions of domination. Rather than become politicians proposing programs and institutional frameworks into which to channel the struggle and seeking adherents to our programs, it makes much more sense for us to be comrades in struggle practicing and proposing methods of struggle free of formalization and institutionalization that encourage self-organization and self-activity in revolt. Only such self-organized revolt could ever create the indomitable individuals who would stop the rise of a new dominating power at its conception. Only in such a practice do we begin to see the glimmer of the new world we seek. Nothing is guaranteed by this, but if we hedge our bets in order to guarantee everything in advance, we have already lost.

AGAINST MILITARISM:

The State, Exploitation and War

"War is the health of the state." The truth of this statement stems from a deeper reality: war is, in fact, the basic functioning of the state. But to understand this one must have clarity of the nature of war and "peace". During the times when most people considered war in terms of the threat of nuclear annihilation, fear clouded understanding. Although this threat hasn't actually disappeared, it no longer seems to loom on the horizon with the immediacy that it had in the '80's and before. The military actions we have seen in recent years could remove the cloud that prevents a clear understanding of the nature of war if we examine them well.

In recent decades there have been very few declared wars in spite of the fact that military actions have constant. As early as the 60's, the U.S. war against Viet Nam was never directly declared, but rather started as "advising" and then evolved into a "police action". Since then military actions have been known by such names as "peacekeeping mission", "humanitarian mission", "surgical strike", etc.

This apparently Orwellian language is in fact very revealing to those who examine it carefully. If the bombing of hospitals and apartment buildings can be a "police action", then events such as the bombing of the MOVE house in Philadelphia are simply par for the course. It should also come as no surprise that increasingly big city police forces are receiving military training and that the Marines have been training in American cities for dealing with urban unrest. In the case of the former, we are dealing with the training of "peace officers", and in the case of the latter, with the training of "peace-keeping forces". The unity of purpose between the police and the military is thus quite evident.

The purpose which these two institutions serve is social peace. But if armed organizations are necessary for the

maintenance of social peace, then this so-called "peace" rests on a bed-rock of violence. All states, however democratic, only exist by means of force. From its beginning, the purpose of the state has always been to maintain the privilege of the powerful few against the exploited many. In light of this, it is evident that social peace means nothing other than the suppression of rebellion, of any uprising of the exploited. Such suppression involves violence or the threat of violence—the perpetual terrorism of the state visible in uniform on every street. Thus, social peace is simply an aspect of the ongoing social war of the rulers against those who they exploit, the war necessary to maintain capitalism and the state.

In this light pacifism is useless against militarism and war. To call states to interact peacefully is to ignore the primary function of the state. For the state, war is peace-that is to say, violence the way to maintain social peace, the continuation of domination and exploitation. This is as true for democratic states as it is for blatantly dictatorial and oligarchic regimes. The former merely supplement the force of arms with the illusory participation in consensus creating "dialogue"—which always upholds the present order—as a means to keep the exploited under control. So if the struggle against militarism and war is not to be a futile symbolic gesture that ultimately upholds what it claims to fight, it must leave behind the moralisms of pacifism and humanitarianism which the state has already drawn into the realm of its justifications for war. This struggle must recognize the reality of the ongoing social war against the exploited and of the necessity to transform itself into a revolutionary struggle aimed at destroying the state and capital. For only when the state and capital are destroyed will the ongoing social war come to an end.

AGAINST BINARY THINKING

As our desire to create our lives as we see fit, to realize ourselves to the fullest extent, to reappropriate the conditions of our existence, develops into a real project of revolt against all domination and oppression, we begin to encounter the world with a more penetrating eye. Our ideas sharpen as they become tools in a life and in relationships aimed at the destruction of the social order and the opening of unknown possibilities for exploring the infinity of singular beings. With a clear aim, a resolute project of revolt, it is much easier to throw off the methods of thought imposed by this society: by school, religion, television, the media, advertising, elections, the internet—all the educational, informational and communications tools through which the ruling order expresses itself. One who has a life project, a project of revolt that motivates her activities to their depths, based on his desires and passions, not on an ideology or cause, will thus express her ideas, analyses and critiques with the assurance of one who is speaking from life, from the depths of his own being.

But where a projectual practice of revolt is lacking (and, let's be clear, I am not talking about having a bunch of random "radical" projects like an infoshop, a pirate radio station, a "Food not Bombs", etc, but of creating one's life and relationships in active revolt against the current existence in its totality), people continue to encounter the world in ways that they were taught, using the methods of thinking imposed by the current social order—this tolerant order of democratic discussion where there are two sides to every question; where we all have a choice…among the limited options offered in the marketplace of goods and of opinions, that is; where the "ideas" offered have all been separated from

life, drained of all except the most instrumental passions and desires, drained of joy and sorrow and rage; where every desire is drained of its singularity and immediate content and conformed to the needs of whatever ideology and of the marketplace. There is no place here for the strong and passionate critique that springs from our desire for the fullness of life, from our awareness of the complexity of the world we face and the world we want to create, because here all ideas have been flattened into opinions and every opinion is equal—and equally empty.

And so without a project of revolt that springs from the fullness of our being and our relationships, even we anarchists find our thinking permeated with the methodology of opinion. Thus, the binary method of the public poll penetrates into the expression of so-called anarchist ideas: are you a communist or are you an individualist? do you sacrifice yourself and your desires to a moralistic "green anarchist" vision of a distant future where what is left of humanity reverts to the supposed edenic conditions of prehistoric foragers or to an equally distant "red anarchist" vision of the self-managed industrial workers' paradise? do you adhere to feminism or do you uphold male domination? The list could go on, but the point is that such binary thinking is a clear sign that one's revolt is still in the realm of morals and ideals external to oneself and thus in the realm of opinion.

To imagine a communism developed precisely to expand individual freedom and to see such freedom as flourishing in the context of that equality of access to all the tools necessary for determining the conditions of one's existence that is true communism—this is a bit complex for the world of opinion. To conceive of a critique of civilization that originates in one's desire for the fullness of being that civilization cannot offer, because its expansion can only be based on a homogenization that diminishes existence in the name of monolithic control,

and to therefore envision and act to realize not a model of an ideal world, but that revolutionary rupture that opens myriads of unknown possibilities from which a new decivilized existence could develop based on our desires and dreams—this is nothing but pure egoism from the standpoint of ideology and morality. To criticize the poverty of the practice of feminism and the emptiness of so many of its theoretical constructs which have left it incapable of truly confronting and moving beyond gender because one imagines a liberation from the constraints of gender that is not homogenization into a universal androgyny but rather the opening up of the full spectrum of singular expressions of one's being in the sexual and passional spheres and every other sphere that gender has affected—this is pure arrogance particularly if one happens to be a man. No, it is better to keep one's thought within the constraints of offered choices, to flatten one's ideas into opinions, to not only tolerate blatant stupidity, but to blind oneself to it even among those who are supposedly our comrades, to avoid living and thinking in a projectual manner. Otherwise, one risks meeting life face-to-face and truly having to grapple with existence.

But for me revolt is not a hobby, anarchy is not a word I use to make myself feel more radical. These are my life's project, the way of being I am striving to create. The ideas I develop are not mere opinions, but the outgrowth of the passionate reason of my project, based on my life, my desires and my dreams as they encounter the world. They are as fluid as lived desires and dreams, but this fluidity is strong, assured and determined. And if, as some have said, this makes me dogmatic and arrogant, then we need more dogmatic and arrogant anarchists. Because it is not the ceaseless negotiation of opinions, of democratic discourse, that will bring down the ruling order, but the revolt of indomitable individuals who refuse to compromise themselves, coming together to destroy

all domination.

ON DISPOSSESSION AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Due to the immensity of the current social order and the facelessness of the bureaucratic and technological systems through which it maintains its power, one can easily come to see it as inevitable, as a predetermined system of relationships in which we have no choice but to play our role. The aim of the state and the ruling class is total domination over all of existence, and here in the heart of this monster it can seem as though they have, indeed, achieved this aim. Aren't we forced, day after day, to engage in activities and relationships not of our choosing?

This is what defines us as proletarians. We have been dispossessed of our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence. But this dispossession is not an inevitable and predetermined historical development. Right now, at the fringes of the capitalist order, in places like Bougainville and West Papua, one can see how this dispossession takes place. Individuals with names and face, the institutions they establish in order to exercise their power and those who choose to obey them due to the extortion of survival act with violence to dispossess those who still have some freedom to create their lives on their own terms. And in the face of these violent intrusions, those who have not yet been proletarianized often take up arms against those who are trying to steal their lives from them. It is not an inevitable historical process that is—often literally—bulldozing their lives into the ground, but the force of arms of those in power. Real individuals are responsible for the social conditions that exist. Real individuals benefit from them and, thus, do everything in their power to

expand them.

But it is not just the activities of those who rule that reproduce the current order of domination and exploitation, but also—and more essentially—the activity of those who obey them. Here, in the heart of the beast, our dispossession seems to be complete. Unlike West Papuans and the people of Bougainville, we have no social life of our own creating. Every choice we make is made under duress, the extortion of survival's domination over life hanging over our heads like a sword. Nonetheless, obedience is a choice. The mutinous activities in the American military that played a major role in forcing US withdrawal from Vietnam is proof enough of this, as are the little acts of insubordination carried out everyday by the exploited to make their lives a little bit more bearable, a little bit more dignified. And it is in such acts that one begins to take responsibility for one's life.

The social order of the state and capital leaves us very few options. One can understand when some, like Daniel Quinn, suggest that we "just walk away", but against a system that requires expansion this is no solution. If the mountain people of West Papua have been forced to take up arms against the intrusion of the civilized order, we who live in its heart can't pretend that we can simply run away. If we do not want to accept our exploitation and choose obedience with the occasional petty transgression, then we are forced to live outside the law, quite literally to try to steal our lives back as best we can against all odds.

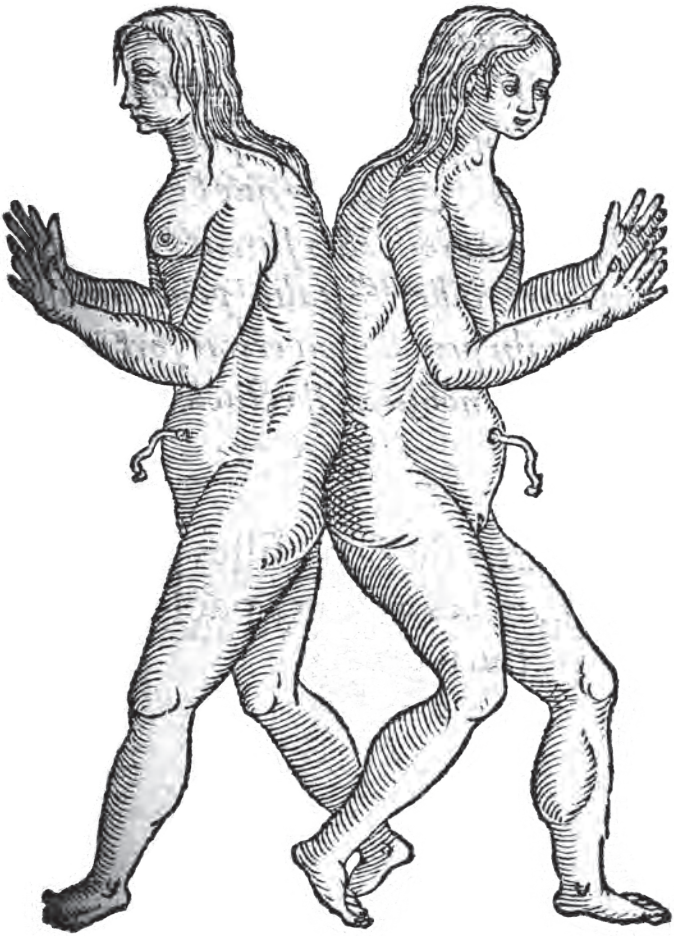
Increasingly, a similar life is being forced upon more and more of people. The multitudes of tribal and peasant peoples being forced off the lands where they made their lives do not find jobs waiting for them in the cities to which they are forced to migrate. And even in the affluent nations of the North, many people find themselves falling out the bottom. The only place for these people is the realm of the illegal economy, the so-called

"black market". But this is still the market, these people are still exploited and here survival still reigns over life.

For anarchists and revolutionaries, the issue is not mere survival, but the reappropriation of life, the overturning of the conditions of existence that have been imposed on us. This project ultimately requires the active revolt of the multitudes of exploited and excluded people, as well as those on the margins resisting the efforts of capitalist institutions to steal their lives from them. But unless one has faith in some form of historical determinism or spontaneism, there is no sense in simply sitting back and waiting until "the time is ripe" and the multitudes rise.

Our activity creates the circumstances in which insurrection can flower; our refusal to obey, our insistence upon creating our lives as our own against all odds here and now and attacking the institutions of domination and exploitation as we confront them in our lives are the seeds of revolution. If revolution is the collective struggle for individual realization (and this seems to me to be the most consistently anarchist understanding of the term) and, thus, against proletarianization, then it develops with the solidarity that grows between individuals in revolt as they recognize their struggle in the struggles of others. For this reason, and for the joy it gives me here and now, I will not wait until the time is ripe, but will begin to take my life back here and now.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS



OF AFFINITY

"Today the spirit drowns in a mass of chance encounters. We are looking for those who are still alive enough to support each other beyond this; those fleeing Normal Life."
—Against Sleep and Nightmare

We live in a society in which most of our encounters have already been defined in terms of predetermined roles and relationships in which we have no say. A randomness devoid of surprise surrounds the scheduled torment of work with a "free time" lacking in joy, wonder or any real freedom to act on one's own terms, a "free time" not so very different from the job from which it is supposed to be a respite. Exploitation permeates the whole of existence as each of our interactions is channeled into a form of relating that has already been determined in terms of the needs of the ruling order, in order to guarantee the continued reproduction of a society in which a few control the conditions of everyone's existence and so own all of our lives.

So the revolt against our exploitation is not essentially a political or even an economic struggle, but a struggle against the totality of our current existence (and so against politics and economy), against the daily activities and interactions imposed on us by the economy, the state and all the institutions and apparati of domination and control that make up this civilization. Such a struggle cannot be carried out by any means. It requires a method of acting in and encountering the world in which new relations, those of free individuals who refuse to be exploited and dominated and equally refuse to dominate or exploit, manifest here and now. In other words, our struggle must be the immediate reappropriation of our lives, in conflict with the present society.

Starting from this basis, the refusal of formality and the development of relations of affinity cannot be seen in merely tactical or strategic terms. Rather, they are reflections in practice of what we are fighting for if we are, indeed, fighting to take back our lives, to reappropriate the capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence—i.e., the capacity for self-organization.

The development of relationships of affinity is specifically the development of a deep knowledge of one another in a complex manner, a profound understanding of each other's ideas, dreams, desires, passions, aspirations, capacities, conceptions of the struggle and of life. It is, indeed a discovery of what is shared in common, but more significantly it is a discover of differences, of what is unique to each individual, because it is at the point of difference that one can truly discover the projects one can carry out with another.

Since the development of relationships of affinity is itself a reflection of our aims as anarchists and since it is intended to create a deep and ever-expanding knowledge of one another, it cannot simply be left to chance. We need to intentionally create the opportunity for encounters, discussions and debates in which our ideas, aspirations and visions of the revolutionary struggle can come into contention, where real affinities and real conflicts can come out and be developed—not with the aim of finding a unifying middle ground in which every one is equally compromised, but to clarify distinctions and so discover a real basis for creating projects of action that aren't simply playing the role of radical, activist or militant, but that are real reflections of the desires, passions and ideas of those involved. While publications, internet discussion boards and correspondence can provide means for doing this on some levels, to the extent to which they are open forums they tend to be too random, with potential for the discussion to lose any projectuality and get sidetracked into the democratic exchange

of opinions which have little connection to one's life. To my mind, the best and most significant discussions can take place in face-to-face encounters between people with some clarity of why they are coming together to discuss. Thus, organizing discussion groups, conferences, meetings and the like is an integral part of the development of relations of affinity and so of projects of action.

The necessity to pursue the development of relationships of affinity with intention does not mean the development of a formal basis for affinity. It seems to me that formality undermines the possibility of affinity, because it is by nature based on a predetermined, and therefore arbitrary, commonality. Formal organization is based upon an ideological or programmatic unity that ultimate comes down to adherence to the organization as such. Differences must be swept aside for the cause of the organization, and when differences are swept aside, so also are dreams, desires, aspirations and passions since these can only ever belong to the individual. But, in fact, formal organization has nothing to do with intention or projectuality. In fact, by providing an ideology to adhere to it relieves the individual of the responsibility of thinking for herself and developing his own understanding of the world and of her struggle in it. In providing a program, it relieves the individual of the necessity of acting autonomously and making practical analyses of the real conditions in which she is struggling. So, in fact, formality undermines projectuality and the capacity for self-organization and so undermines the aim of anarchist struggle.

Relationships of affinity are the necessary basis of self-organization on the most basic daily level of struggle and of life. It is the deep and growing knowledge of one another that provides the basis for developing projects of revolt that truly reflect our own aspirations and dreams, for developing a shared struggle that is based in the recognition and, at its best, the

passionate enjoyment of our very real and beautiful differences. The development of social revolution will, of course, require an organizing of activity beyond the range of our relationships of affinity, but it is the projects that we develop from these relationships that give us the capacity for self-organization, the strength to refuse all formality and, thus, all of the groups that claim to represent the struggle, whether they call themselves parties, unions or federations. In the relationship of affinity, a new way of relating free from all roles and every hackneyed social relationship already begins to develop, and with it an apparent unpredictability that the authorities will never understand. Here and now, we grasp a world of wonder and joy that is a powerful weapon for destroying the world of domination.

ANTI-MILITARISM AND SOCIAL INSURRECTION

Of course, as an anarchist, I am opposed to all of the state's wars. If, historically, particular anarchists have supported certain wars (Kropotkin's support of the Allies in World War I, for example), this has shown a lack of coherence in their analysis and a willingness to allow political and strategic thinking to take precedence over a principled attempt to create the life and world one wants here and now. Wars of the state can never increase freedom since freedom does not simply consist in a quantitative lessening of domination and exploitation (what Kropotkin perceived as the outcome of the defeat of imperialist Germany), but in a qualitative transformation of existence that destroys them, and state wars simply change the power relationships between those who dominate.

So the anarchist opposition to state wars is, in fact, opposition to the types of social relationships that make such war possible. In other wards, it is opposition to militarism in its totality. And militarism is not just war as such. It is a social hierarchy of order givers and order takers. It is obedience, domination and submission. It is the capacity to perceive other human beings as abstractions, mere numbers, death counts. It is, at the same time, the domination of strategic considerations and efficiency for its own sake over life and the willingness to sacrifice oneself for a "Great Cause" that one has been taught to believe in.

Considered in this way, anti-militarism carries within it, not just the opposition to the state's wars, but also a conception of how we wish to carry out our revolutionary struggle against the state and capital. We are not pacifists. A qualitative transformation of life and relationships capable of destroying the institutions of domination and exploitation will involve a violent upheaval of conditions, a rupture with the present—that is to say a social insurrection. And here and now as well, as we confront these institutions in our lives, destructive attack is a legitimate and necessary response. But to militarize this struggle, to transform it essentially into a question of strategies and tactics, of opposing forces and numbers, is to begin to create within our struggle that which we are trying to destroy. The essence of militarization is, in fact, the essence of the society of the market and the state: quantification, the measuring of all things. The anarchist ideal of the freedom of every individual to fully realize herself in free association with those of his choosing without interference from ruling social institutions or lack of access to all that is necessary to achieve this aim is, in fact, the very opposite of such a measured existence.

Armed struggle is likely to be part of any social insurrection, but this does not require the creation of a military force.

Such a formation could even be considered as a sign that the far more significant movement of social subversion is weakening, that the transformation of social relationships has begun to stagnate. From an anarchist perspective, the specialization inherent in the formation of a revolutionary army has to be considered as a contradiction to anarchist principles. If, in the midst of social insurrection, the insurgent people as a whole arm themselves with all they need for their struggle, this would undermine the tendency toward militarization. When we remember that our primary aim is social subversion, the transformation of social relationships, that this is the real strength of the movement because it is in the process of this practice of subversion that we discover our indomitable singularity and that arms are simply a tool among many that we use in this project, then the importance of rejecting militarization should become quite clear. There is no joy in militarism. Armed joy is found in the collective project of individual self-realization finding its means to destroy all domination with every tool it hand, transforming life arm in hand.

Neither pacifism, nor militarism, but social insurrection.

Against the Logic of Submission

2000-2001

AGAINST THE LOGIC OF SUBMISSION

A distinguishing factor of the anarchist idea of revolution is the importance of the individual in bringing this about. Although collectivist ideology has dulled this realization even in most anarchist circles, it still manifests in such choices as abstention from voting and military service. But for those seeking to develop an insurrectional practice, this realization needs to go much further than a few abstentions.

No revolutionary anarchist denies the necessity of a large-scale uprising of the exploited to destroy the state, capital and every institution of power and privilege. But revolution is not a gift that falls from the sky or is granted by an abstract History. Actions of individuals help to build the circumstance which can make uprisings occur and can push them in the direction of generalized revolt.

This means that rather than waiting around for the revolution like certain marxists, trying to read historical signs so that one will be ready, it makes more sense that we anarchists consider ourselves to be in revolt at every moment of our lives and attack this social order without worrying about whether "the time is ripe". Individual acts of revolt which are easily repeated and imitated provide the basis for the development of forms of mass action in which the individual is not lost and delegation is absent—that is to say insurrectionary action that could destroy the present reality and open the possibility for creating a world in which every individual is able grasp all that they need to fully realize themselves.

But equally important is the anarchist recognition of the primacy of the actual, living individual (as opposed to the collectivized cog and to the abstract concept of the individual) is the recognition that we need to become a certain sort of being, a being capable of acting on our own terms to realize our own desires and dreams in the face of the most fierce and

powerful enemy: this entire civilization—the state, capital, the technological system…

To live as a rebel, as a self-willed anarchist revolutionary, requires a great deal of will, determination and spirit in the face of dizzying odds. Thus, one essential aspect of developing an insurrectional practice is the transformation of oneself into such a spirited, willful being. Such a transformation does not take place through therapy but through attacking the social order both in its manifestations in the world and *in oneself and one's relationships.* An uncompromising cruelty may prove essential to this task, because there are so many chains to be broken, so many limits to be destroyed. As one comrade has said, the individual quest is "the appropriation of everything that has been subtracted from him through family, school, institutions, roles, in order to find his specificity, totality, universality, lost… in the process of domestication and the construction of symbolic culture." So the point is to make the decision to take one's life back in its totality, a decision that requires just the sort of ferocity that will be necessary to demolish this society. And such a decision will transform all one's relationships, demanding a clarity that will leave no room for submission to the demands of social protocol, disrespectful tolerance or pity for those who fear the energy of unchanneled desire more than its suppression. In making this decision (and the decision is only truly made as one acts to realize it), one is completely rejecting the logic of submission that dominates most relationships.

A PROJECTUAL LIFE

An understanding of how the decision to live in revolt against the present reality relates to desire, relationships, love and friendship requires an understanding of how such a decision transforms those who make it. The logic of submission—the

logic that the social order seeks to impose on the exploited—is a logic of passivity, of resignation to the mediocre existence offered by this order. According to this logic, life is something that happens to us, that we simply "make the best of", a perspective that defeats us before we've begun to struggle.

But some of us burn with an energy that goads us towards something else, something different. In our burning we suffer anguish from every humiliation that the present world imposes on us. We cannot resign, accept our place and content ourselves with just getting by. Moved to decisive action by our passion, against all the odds we come to view life differently—or more precisely, to live differently.

A social reality exists. It is smothering the planet with commodities and control, imposing a pathetic and miserable existence of enslavement to authority and the market everywhere. Starting from a refusal of this imposed existence, a decision to rise up against it, we are faced with the necessity of creating our lives as our own, of projecting them. We are posing ourselves a most difficult task: the transformation of ourselves, of our relationships and of existence itself. These transformations are not separate; they constitute a single task—a life projectuality that aims toward the destruction of the social order—that is to say an insurrectional anarchist projectuality.

At present , so many of us are so careful, so apologetic, ready to distance ourselves from even our most radical and defiant acts. This indicates that we have not yet understood what it means to live our lives projectually. Our actions are still tentative, not full of ourselves, but stepped into lightly with a readiness to withdraw at the least sign risk or danger. Contrarily, the development of an anarchist projectuality requires that one immerse oneself into what one does without holding back, without hedging one's bets. Not that this immersion is ever a finished project. It is a thing in motion,

a tension that must be perpetually lived, perpetually grappled with. But it has been proven over and over and over again that hedging one's bets as surely brings defeat as surrender. Having taken this responsibility for our lives, there is no room for half measures. The point is to live without measure. Longer chains are chains nonetheless.

One reads in Nietzsche of *amor fati*. The very opposite of the fatal resignation demanded by the logic of submission, *amor fati* is that love of fate *as a worthy adversary* that moves one to courageous action. It springs from the willful self-confidence that develops in those who put all of their substance into what they do, say or feel. Here regrets melt away as one learns to act as one wills; mistakes, failures and defeats are not devastations, but situations from which to learn and move on in the perpetual tension toward the destruction of all limits.

In society's eyes, any refusal of its order is a crime, but this immersion into life moves insurgence beyond the level of crime. At this point, the insurgent has ceased to merely react to the codes, rules and laws of society and has come to determine her actions on his own terms without regard for the social order. Beyond tolerance and everyday politeness, finished with tact and diplomacy, She is not given to speaking abstractly about anything that relates to his life and interactions, but rather gives weight to every word. This comes from a refusal to skim the surface of things, a desire rather to immerse oneself into the projects and relations one has chooses to create or involve oneself in, to draw them fully into oneself, because these are the things with which one creates one's life.

Like revolution, love, friendship and the wide variety of other possible relationships are not events one waits for, things that merely happen. When one recognizes herself as having agency, as being an individual capable of acting and creating, these cease to be wishes, ghostly longings aching in the depth of one's gut; they become possibilities toward

which one moves consciously, projectually, with one's will. That burning energy that goads one to revolt is desire—desire that has broken free from the channel that reduced it to mere longing. This same desire that moves one to create her life as a projectuality toward insurrection, anarchy, freedom and joy also provokes the realization that such a projectuality is best built on shared projects. Liberated desire is an expansive energy—an opening of possibilities—and wants to share projects and actions, joys and pleasures, love and revolt. An insurrection of one may indeed be possible. I would even argue that it is the necessary first step toward a shared insurrectional project. But an insurrection of two, three, many increases courage and enjoyment and opens a myriad of passional possibilities.

Obviously, the various modes of relating that this society puts into place for us to fall into cannot fulfill this desire. Tepid "love" partnerships, "friendships" based on the camaraderie of mutual humiliation and disrespectful tolerance and the daily encounters of no substance that maintain the banality of survival—these are all based on the logic of submission, on merely accepting the mediocrity this reality we must destroy offers. They have nothing to do with projectual desire for the other.

The relations that the decision to live projectually as a revolutionary and an anarchist moves one to seek are relations of affinity, of passion, of intensity, varieties of living relations that help one to build life as desire moves her. They are relations with clearly defined others who have affinity with one's way of living and being. Such relations must be created in a fluid and vital way as dynamic, changeable and expansive as affinity and passion themselves are. Such an expansive opening of possibilities has no place within the logic of submission, and that in itself makes it a worthy project for anarchist to pursue.

FREE LOVE

Because revolutionary anarchists of all types have recognized the freedom of every individual to determine how they will live on their own terms to be a central aim of anti-authoritarian revolution, we have spoken more often and with more courage of the transformation of personal life that must be part of any real revolution. Thus, questions of love and erotic desire have been openly discussed in anarchist circles from very early on. Anarchists were among the first advocates of free love recognizing in marriage and the absurd sexual restrictions imposed by religious morality ways in which submission to authority was imposed. Women such as Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre recognized in puritanical morality one of the greatest enemies to the liberation of women in particular as well as humanity in general.

But the free love advocated by anarchists should not be confused with the tawdry hedonism advocated by Playboy and other promoters of commodified sexual liberation. This latter is merely a reaction to Puritanism from within the present social context. Its continued adherence to the logic of submission is evident in its commodification and objectification of sex, its dismissive attitude toward passionate love-because it can't be quantified and priced-and its tendency to judge people based on sexual willingness, performance and conquest. Love and erotic desire freed from the logic of submission clearly lies elsewhere.

The struggle against the logic of submission begins with the struggle of individuals to create the lives and relations they desire. In this context, free love means precisely the freedom of each individual's erotic desires from the social and moral restrictions that channel them into a few specific forms useful

to society so that each may create the way she loves as he sees fit in relation to those she may love. Such a liberation opens the way for an apparently infinite variety of possible loving and erotic relations. Most people would only want to explore a few of these, but the point of such liberation is not that one must explore as many forms of erotic desire as possible, but that one has the possibility to really choose and create ways of loving that bring him joy, that expand her life and goad him to an ever increasing intensity of living and of revolt.

One of the most significant obstacles presently facing us in this area is pity for weakness and neurosis. There are individuals who know clearly what they desire in each potential loving encounter, people who can act and respond with a projectual clarity that only those who have made their passions and desires their own can have. But when these individuals act on their desires, if another who is less sure of themselves is unnerved or has their feelings hurt, they are expected to change their behavior to accommodate the weakness of this other person. Thus the strong-willed individual who has grasped the substance of free love and begun to live it often finds herself suppressed or ostracized by his own supposed comrades. If our aims are indeed liberation and the destruction of the logic of submission in all areas of life, then we cannot give in to this. The point is to transform ourselves into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate rebels-and, thus, also into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate lovers-and this requires acting without guilt, regret or pity. This self-transformation is an essential aspect of the revolutionary transformation of the world , and we cannot let it get side-tracked by a pity that degrades both the one who pities and the one who is pitied. Compassion-that feeling with another because one recognizes one's own condition in theirs-can be a beautiful and revolutionary feeling, but pity-which looks down at another's misery and offers charity and self-sacrifice, is worthless for creating a world of strong individuals who can live

and love as they choose.

But an even greater impediment to a real practice of free love and the open exploration the varieties of possible relationships is that most people (even most anarchists) have so little greed for, and therefore so little generosity with, passion, intensity of feeling, love, joy, hatred, anguish-all the flaming pangs of real living. To truly allow the expansiveness of passionate intensity to flower and to pursue it where the twisting vine of desire takes it-this exploration requires will, strength and courage... but mainly it requires breaking out of the economic view of passions and emotions. It is only in the realm of economy-of goods for sale-that greed and generosity contradict each other. In the realm of uncommodified feelings, passions, desires, ideas, thoughts and dreams, greed and generosity go hand-in-hand. The more one wants of these things, the more expansive one must be in sharing them. The more generous one is with them, the more one will have. It is the nature of these things to be expansive, to seek to broaden all horizons, to take more and more of reality into themselves and transform it.

But this expansiveness is not indiscriminate. Love and erotic desire can manifest expansively in many different ways, and individuals choose the ways and the individuals with whom they wish to explore them. It makes no sense, however, to make these decisions based on an imagined dearth of something that is, in fact, potentially beyond measure. Rather such decisions are best based on desire for those to whom one chooses to relate and the potential one perceives in them to make the fires of passion burn ever more brightly.

The mechanics of erotic desire-homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, monogamy, non-monogamy, etc.-are not the substance of free love. It can manifest in all of these forms and more. Its substance is found in those who choose to expand themselves, to goad themselves to expand their passions, dreams desires and thoughts. Free love, like revolution, acts to recreate

reality in its own image, the image of a great and dangerous utopia. Thus it seeks to turn reality on its head. This is no easy path. It has no place for our weaknesses, no time for neurotic self-pity or meagerness. For love in its most impassioned and unconstrained forms is as cruel as revolution. How could it be otherwise when its goal is the same: the transformation of every aspect of life and the destruction of all that prevents it?

PASSIONATE FRIENDSHIP

We live in a world in which the majority of encounters and interactions involve work and commodity exchange. In other words, the dominant forms of relating are economic, based on the domination of survival over life. In such a world, it is no surprise that the concept of friendship no longer has much value. Today, neither the daily interactions of one's "communities" (these strange, disconnected "communities" of family, school, work) nor the chance encounters (at the market, on the bus, at some public event) have much chance of sparking a real and intense interest in another, an impassioned curiosity to discover who they are what we might be able to create with them. The common thread that runs through these not so varied interactions and encounters is that they originate in the operations of domination and exploitation, in the social order that immiserates our lives an to which most people grudgingly submit.

The sorts of relationships most likely to spring from such a situation are those that reflect the humiliation and social impoverishment inherent in it. Based on the necessity to escape the isolation of a crowded, but atomized society, a generalized "friendliness" that is slightly more than mere politeness (since it permits harmless, light mockery and safe, substanceless flirtation) develops. On the basis of

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this generalized "friendliness", it is possible to meet some individuals with whom to commiserate more closely—people with whom to share a beer at the pub, go to football games or rock shows or rent a movie… And these are one's friends.

It really is no wonder then that what is called friendship today so often seems to be nothing more than the camaraderie of mutual humiliation and disrespectful toleration. When all we really have in common is our shared exploitation and enslavement to commodity consumption and our differences mainly lie in our social identities, themselves largely defined by our jobs,, the commodities we buy and our uses to those who rule us, there is really very little to spark pride, joy, wonder and passion in our so-called friendships. If the deep loneliness of massified, commodified society draws us to others, what little our impoverished beings have to offer each other soon leads to resentment. Thus, interactions between friends at this time seem to be mostly dominated by comic mockery and various forms of one-upmanship. While such forms of play may indeed be amusing as part of a strong relationship based on real mutual pleasure, when it becomes the main way of relating, surely something is lacking.

Some of us refuse to accept the impositions of exploitation and domination. We strive to create our own lives and in the process of create our live and in the process create relationships that escape the logic of submission to proletarianization and commodity consumption. By our own will, we redefine our commonalities and our differences, clarifying them through the alchemy of struggle and revolt, basing them on our own passions and desires. This makes the form that friendship tends to take in this society completely unpalatable: to simply tolerate another out of loneliness and call this one friend—how pathetic! Starting from that sense of pride that moved us to rebel, that point of selfish dignity that will not tolerate further humiliation, we seek to build our friendships upon

the greatness we discover in each other—joy, passion, wonder sparked both by what we share in common and by how we differ. Why should we expect less of friendship than we do of erotic love? Why do we expect so little of both? Rebellion sparks fire in the hearts of those who rise up, and this fire calls for relationships that burn: loves, friendships, and, yes, even hatreds that reflect the intensity of rebellion. The greatest insult we can give another human being is to merely tolerate them, so let us pursue friendships with the same intensity with which we pursue love, blurring the boundaries between them, creating our own fierce and beautiful ways of relating free of that logic of submission to mediocrity imposed by the state and capital.

HATRED

Having made the decision to refuse to simply live as this society demands, to submit to the existence it imposes on us, we have put ourselves into a position of being in permanent conflict with the social order. This conflict will manifest in many different situations, evoking the intense passions of the strong-willed. Just as we demand of our loves and our friendships a fullness and intensity that this society seeks to suppress, we want to bring all of ourselves to our conflicts as well, particularly our conflict with this society aimed at its destruction, so that we struggle with all the strength necessary to accomplishing our aim. It is in this light, as anarchists, that we would best understand the place of hatred.

The present social order seeks to rationalize everything. It finds passion dangerous and destructive since such intensity of feeling is, after all, opposed to the cold logic of power and profit. There is no place in this society for passionate reason or the reasonable focusing of passion. When the efficient

functioning of the machine is the highest social value, both passion and living, human reason are detrimental to society. Cold rationality based on a mechanistic view of reality is necessary for upholding such a value.

In this light, the campaigns against "hate" promoted not only by every progressive and reformist, but also by the institutions of power which are the basis of the social inequalities (when I refer to equality and inequality in this article, I am not referring to "equality of rights" which is a legal abstraction, but to the concrete differences in access to that which is necessary in order to determine the conditions of one's life) that incorporate bigotry into the very structure of this society, make sense on several levels. By focusing the attempts to battle bigotry onto the passions of individuals, the structures of domination blind many well-meaning people to the bigotry that has been built into the institutions of this society, that is a necessary aspect of its method of exploitation. Thus, the method for fighting bigotry takes a two-fold path: trying to change the hearts of racist, sexist and homophobic individuals and promoting legislation against an undesirable passion. Not only is the necessity for a revolution to destroy a social order founded on institutional bigotry and structural inequality forgotten; the state and the various institutions through which it exercises power are strengthened so that the can suppress "hate". Furthermore, though bigotry in a rationalized form is useful to the efficient functioning of the social machine, an individual passion of too much intensity, even when funneled into the channels of bigotry, presents a threat to the efficient functioning of the social order. It is unpredictable, a potential point for the breakdown of control. Thus, it must necessarily be suppressed and only permitted to express itself in the channels that have been carefully constructed by the rulers of this society. But one of the aspects of this emphasis on "hate"—an individual passion—rather than on institutional inequalities that is most useful to the state is that it permits those

in power—and their media lapdogs—to equate the irrational and bigoted hatred of white supremacists and gay-bashers with the reasonable hatred that the exploited who have risen in revolt feel for the masters of this society and their lackeys. Thus, the suppression of hatred serves the interest of social control and upholds the institutions of power and, hence, the institutional inequality necessary to its functioning.

Those of us who desire the destruction of power, the end of exploitation and domination, cannot let ourselves succumb to the rationalizations of the progressives, which only serve the interests of the rulers of the present. Having chosen to refuse our exploitation and domination, to take our lives as our own in struggle against the miserable reality that has been imposed on us, we inevitably confront an array of individuals, institutions and structures that stand in our way, actively opposing us--the state, capital, the rulers of this order and their loyal guard dogs, the various systems and institutions of control and exploitation. These are our enemies and it is only reasonable that we would hate them. It is the hatred of the slave for the master--or, more accurately, the hatred of the escaped slave for the laws, the cops, the "good citizens", the courts and the institutions that seek to hunt her down and return him to the master. And as with the passions of our loves and friendships, this passionate hatred is also to be cultivated and made our own, its energy focused and directed into the development of our projects of revolt and destruction.

Desiring to be the creators of our own lives and relations, to live in a world in which all that imprisons our desires and suppresses our dreams has disappeared, we have an immense task before us: the destruction of the present social order. Hatred of the enemy—of the ruling order and all who willfully uphold it—is a tempestuous passion that can provide an energy for this task that we would do well to embrace. Anarchist insurrectionaries have a way of viewing life and a revolutionary project through

which to focus this energy, so as to aim it with intelligence and strength. The logic of submission demands the suppression of all passions and their channeling into sentimentalized consumerism or rationalized ideologies of bigotry. The intelligence of revolt embraces all passions, finding in them not only mighty weapons for the battle against this order, but also the wonder and joy of a life lived to the full.

REALISM

"Be realistic: Demand the Impossible!"

This famous slogan, which graced the walls of Paris in May 1968, was truly revolutionary in its time, turning every common sense conception of realism on its head. Now artificial, virtual "realities" have come to dominate social relations. Life is not so much lived as watched, and anything can be seen with the new technologies. Considering this, it is no surprise that a slogan once so challenging to an entire social order has now be come an advertising slogan. In the realm of the virtual, everything is possible for a price. Everything, that is, except a world without prices, a world of actual, self-determined, face-to face relationships in which one chooses one's activities for oneself and concretely acts upon reality within the world.

The circuses that we are offered with our bread present us with spectacles like none ever seen before. Exotic places, strange creatures with magical powers, fantastic explosions, battles and miracles, all these are offered for our entertainment, keeping us glued to the spectator's seat, our activity limited to occasionally flicking a button—not unlike the primary activity in increasing numbers of jobs. So "the impossible" this society offers us is nothing more than spectacular special effects on a screen, the drug of virtuality numbing us to the misery of the reality that

surrounds us, in which possibilities for really living are closing down.

If we are to escape this miserable existence, our revolt must be precisely against social reality in its totality. Realism within this context becomes acceptance. Today when one speaks sincerely of revolution—of striving to overturn the present reality in order to open the possibility of concrete, self-determined human activity and individual freedom—one is being unrealistic, even utopian. But can anything less put an end to the present misery?

Increasingly, in the face of the juggernaut that is civilization, our present social reality, I hear many radicals say, "It's necessary to be realistic; I'll just do what I can in my own life." This is not the declaration of a strong individuality making itself the center of a revolt against the world of domination and alienation, but rather an admission of resignation, a retreat into merely tending one's own garden as the monster lumbers on. The "positive" projects developed in the name of this sort of realism are nothing more than alternative ways of surviving within the present society. They not only fail to threaten the world of capital and the state; they actually ease the pressure on those in power by providing voluntary social services under the guise of creating "counter-institutions". Using the present reality as the place from which they view the world, those who cannot help but see the revolutionary destruction of this reality in which we live as impossible and, therefore, a dangerous goal, so they resign themselves to maintaining an alternative within the present reality.

A more activist form of realism also exists. It is found in a perspective that ignores the totality of the present reality, choosing instead to see only its parts. Thus, the reality of alienation, domination and exploitation is broken down into categories of oppression which are viewed separately such as racism, sexism, environmental destruction and so on. Although

such categorization can indeed be useful for understanding the specifics of how the present social order functions, it usually tends instead to keep people from observing the whole, allowing the leftist project of developing specializations in specific forms of oppression to move forward, developing ideological methods for explaining these oppressions. This ideological approach separates theory from practise leading to a further breakdown into issues upon which to act: equal wages for women, acceptance of gays into the military or the Boy Scouts, protection of a particular wetlands or patch of forest, on and on goes the endless round of demands. Once things are broken down to this level, where any analysis of this society as a whole has disappeared, one is once again viewing things from a place within the present reality. For the activist realist, also known as the leftist, efficacy is the primary value. Whatever works is good. Thus emphasis is place on litigation, legislation, petition to the authorities, negotiation with those who rule us, because these get results—at least if the result one wants is merely the amelioration of one particular problem or the assimilation of a particular group or cause into the present order. But such methods are not effective at all from a revolutionary anarchist perspective, because they are grounded in acceptance of the present reality, in the perspective that this is what is and so we must use it. And that is the perspective of the logic of submission. A reversal of perspective is necessary to free ourselves from this logic.

Such a reversal of perspective requires finding a different place from which to perceive the world, a different position from which to act. Rather than starting from the world as it is, one may choose to start from the will to grasp her life as his own. This decision immediately places one into conflict with the present reality, because here the conditions of existence and, thus, the choices of how one can live have already been determined by the ruling order. This has come about because a few people manage

to take control of the conditions of everybody's existence—precisely, in exchange for bread and circuses, survival graced with a bit of entertainment. Thus, individual revolt needs to arm itself with an analysis of class that expands its critique, awakening a revolutionary perspective. When one also begins to understand the institutional and technological means through which the ruling class maintains, enforces and expands this control, this perspective takes on a social and luddite dimension.

The logic of submission tells us to be realistic, to limit ourselves to the ever-narrowing possibilities that the present reality offers. But when this reality is, in fact, marching toward death—toward the permanent eclipse of the human spirit and the destruction of the living environment—is it truly realistic to "be realistic"? If one loves life, if one wants to expand and flourish, it is absolutely necessary to free desire from the channels to constrain it, to let it flood our minds and hearts with passion that sparks the wildest dreams. Then one must grasp these dreams and from them hone a weapon with which to attack this reality, a passionate rebellious reason capable of formulating projects aimed at the destruction of that which exists and the realization of our most marvelous desires. For those of us who want to make our lives our own, anything less would be unrealistic.

BEYOND FEMINISM, BEYOND GENDER

In order to create a revolution that can put an end to all domination, it is necessary to put an end to the tendency we all have to submit. This requires that we view the roles that this society imposes on us with a cruel and penetrating eye seeking out their weak points with the aim of breaking through their

limits and moving beyond them.

Sexuality is an essential expression of individual desire and passion, of the flame that can ignite both love and revolt Thus, it can be an important force of the individual's will that can raise her beyond the mass as a unique and indomitable being. Gender, on the other hand, is a conduit built by the social order to constrain this sexual energy, to confine and limit it, directing toward the reproduction of this order of domination and submission. Thus, it is an obstruction to an attempt to freely determine how one will live and relate. Nonetheless, up to now, men have been granted more leeway in asserting their will within these roles than women, a reasonable explanation for why more anarchists, revolutionaries and outlaws have been men than women. Women who have been strong, rebellious individuals have been so precisely because they have moved beyond their femininity.

It is unfortunate that the women's liberation movement that reemerged in the 1960's did not succeed in developing a deep analysis of the nature of domination in its totality and of the role played by gender in its reproduction. A movement that had started from a desire to be free of gender roles in order to be full, self-determined individuals was transformed into a specialization just like most partial struggles of the time. This guaranteed that a total analysis would not be possible within this context.

This specialization is the feminism of the present era that began developing out of the women's liberation movement in the late 60's. It does not aim so much at the liberation of individual women from the limits of their gender roles as at the liberation of "woman" as a social category. Within mainstream politics, this project consists of gaining rights, recognition and protection for woman as a recognized social category under the law. In theory, radical feminism moves beyond mere legalities with the aim of liberating

woman as a social category from male domination. Since male domination is not adequately explored as an aspect of total domination, even by anarcha-feminists, the rhetoric of radical feminism frequently takes on a style similar to that of national liberation struggles. But in spite of the differences in style and rhetoric, the practice of mainstream and radical feminism often coincide. This is not by chance.

The specialization of radical feminism actually lies in the cataloguing of wrongs suffered by woman at the hands of man. If this catalogue was ever completed, the specialization would no longer be necessary and it would be time to move beyond this listing of wrongs suffered to an actual attempt to analyze the nature of women's oppression in this society and take real, thought-out action to end it. So the maintenance of this specialization requires that feminists expand this catalogue to infinity, even to the point of explaining the oppressive actions of women in positions of power as expressions of patriarchal power, thus freeing these women from responsibility for their actions. Any serious analysis of the complex relations of domination as it actually exists is laid aside in favor of an ideology in which man dominates and woman is the victim of this domination. But the creation of one's identity on the basis of one's oppression, on the victimization one has suffered, does not provide strength or independence. Instead it creates a need for protection and security that eclipses the desire for freedom and self-determination. In the theoretical and psychological realm, an abstract, universal "sisterhood" may meet this need, but in order to provide a basis for this sisterhood, the "feminine mystique", which was exposed in the 1960's as a cultural construct supporting male domination, is revived in the form of women's spirituality, goddess religion and a variety of other feminist ideologies. The attempt to liberate woman as a social category reaches its apotheosis in the re-creation of the feminine gender role in the name of an elusive gender

solidarity. The fact that many radical feminists have turned to cops, courts and other state programs for protection on the practical level (thus imitating mainstream feminism) only serves to underline the illusory nature of the "sisterhood" they proclaim. Though there have been attempts to move beyond these limits within the context of feminism, this specialization has been its defining quality for three decades. In the forms in which it has been practiced, it has failed to present a revolutionary challenge to either gender or domination. The anarchist project of total liberation calls us to move beyond these limits to the point of attacking gender itself with the aim of becoming complete beings defined not as a conglomeration of social identities, but as unique, whole individuals.

It is both clichéd and mistaken to claim that men and women have been equally oppressed by their gender roles. The male gender role does allow a greater leeway for the assertion of one's will. So just as the liberation of women from their gender role is not a matter of becoming more masculine but rather of moving beyond their femininity, so for men the point is not to be more feminine but to move beyond their masculinity. The point is to discover that core of uniqueness that is in each of us that is beyond all social roles and to make that the point from which we act, live and think in the world, in the sexual realm as in all others. Gender separates sexuality from the wholeness of our being, attaching specific traits to it that serve the maintenance of the present social order. Thus sexual energy, which could have amazing revolutionary potential, is channeled into the reproduction of relations of domination and submission, of dependence and desperation. The sexual misery that this has produced and its commercial exploitation surround us. The inadequacy of calling for people to "embrace both their masculinity and femininity" lies in the lack of analysis of the extent to which both of these concepts are social inventions

serving the purposes of power. Thus, to change the nature of gender roles, to increase their number or modify their form, is useless from a revolutionary perspective, being nothing more than mechanically adjusting the form of the conduits that channel our sexual energy. Instead, we need to reappropriate our sexual energy in order to reintegrate into the totality of our being in order to become so expansive and powerful as to burst every conduit and flood the plain of existence with our indomitable being. This is not a therapeutic task, but rather one of defiant revolt—one that springs from a strong will and a refusal to back down. If our desire is to destroy all domination, then it is necessary that we move beyond everything that holds us back, beyond feminism, yes, and beyond gender, because this is where we find the ability to create our indomitable individuality that rises up against all domination without hesitation. If we wish to destroy the logic of submission, this must be our minimum goal.

SECURITY CULTURE AND EXPANSIVE LIVING

Life today is far too small. Forced into roles and relationships that reproduce the current social order, it focuses on the petty, on that which can be measured, priced, bought and sold. The meager existence of shopkeepers and security guards has been imposed everywhere, and real life, expansive life, life with no limits other than our own capacities exists

only in revolt against this society. So those of us who want an expansive existence, life lived to the full, are moved to take action, to attack the institutions that compel us to live such petty lives.

Moved to take back our lives and make them wellsprings of the marvelous, we inevitably encounter repression. Everyday, hidden mechanisms of repression operate to prevent revolt, to guarantee the submission that maintains the social order. The necessities of survival, the underlying awareness of always being watched, the barrage of prohibitions that meet the eyes on signs or in the person of a cop, the very structure of the social environments in which we move, these are enough to keep most people in line, eyes to the ground, minds empty of all except the petty worries of the day. But when one has had enough of this impoverished existence and decides that there must be more, that she cannot tolerate another day in which life is diminished even more, the repression ceases to be so subtle. The spark of revolt has to be suppressed; the maintenance of the social order requires it.

The expansion of life cannot occur in hiding—that would simply be a change of cells within the social prison. But because this expansion, this tension toward freedom, moves us to attack this social order, to take action that is outside and frequently against its written and implied laws, we are forced to deal with the question of how to evade the uniformed guard dogs of the ruling class. So we cannot ignore the question of security.

I have always considered the question of security a simple one, a matter of practical intelligence that anyone should be capable of figuring out. By developing relations of affinity, on decides with whom one can act. There is no need to say a word about an action to anyone who is not involved in it. This is basic and should go without saying for anyone who decides to action against domination. But such practical

intelligence has no need to enshroud itself in an atmosphere of suspicion and secretiveness where every word and every thought must be watched, in which even the ***words*** of defiance are considered too great a risk. If our practice takes us there, we have already lost.

In the context of illegal activity, security is essential. But even in this context, it is not the top priority. Our top priority is always the creation of the lives and relationships we desire, the opening of the possibility for the fullness of existence that the system of domination and exploitation cannot allow. Those of us who truly desire such an expansive existence want to express it in all of our actions.

In this light, the call for the development of a "***security culture***" seems strange to me. When I first heard the term, my immediate thought was: "That is precisely the sort of culture we live in!" The cops and cameras on every corner and in every shop, the increasing numbers of identification cards and of interactions requiring their use, the various weapons systems put in place for national security, and on and on—the culture of security surrounds us, and it is the same as the culture of repression. Certainly, as anarchists this is not what we want.

Many of the practical suggestions made by the proponents of security culture are basic good sense for one who is taking action against the institutions of domination. It is obvious that one shouldn't leave evidence or speak to the police, that one should take the due precautions to avoid arrest—a situation that would certainly not enhance one's struggle for a full free life. But it makes no sense to speak of a security *culture*. The caution necessary to avoid arrest does not reflect the sort of life and relationships we want to build. At least I hope not.

When anarchists begin to see security as their top

priority—as a "culture" that they must develop—paranoia comes to dominate relationships. Anarchist conferences are set up with levels of bureaucracy and (let's call things what they are) policing that too closely parallels what we are trying to destroy. Suspicion replaces comradeship and solidarity. If someone doesn't look or dress right, he finds herself ostracized, excluded from involvement. Something vital has been lost here—the reason for our struggle. It has vanished behind the hard armor of militancy, and we have come to be the mirror image of our enemy.

The anarchist struggle slips into this joyless, paranoid rigidity when it is not carried out as an attempt to create life differently, joyfully, intensely, but is rather treated as a cause to which one is to sacrifice oneself. One's struggle then becomes ***moral***, not a question of desire, but of right and wrong, good and evil, conceived as absolute and knowable. Here is the source of much of the rigidity, much of the paranoia and much of the unwarranted sense of self-importance that one finds much too often in anarchist circles. We are the righteous warriors surrounded on all sides by the forces of evil. We must protect ourselves from any possibility of contamination. And the character armor hardens undermining the joyful spirit that provides the courage necessary for the destruction of the world of domination.

This destruction, this demolition of the social prison that surrounds us would bring us face-to-face with the unknown. If we confront it with fear and suspicion, we will build the new prisons ourselves. Some already are, in their minds and in their projects. This is why our projects of attack must originate in and be carried out with joy and an expansive generosity of spirit. The logic of paranoia and fear, the logic of suspicion with its measured words and deeds, is the logic of submission—if not to the present order of domination, then to a morality that diminishes our lives and guarantees

that we will not have the courage to face the unknown, to face the world in which we would find ourselves if the present order were destroyed. Instead, let's embrace the passionate reason of desire that defies all domination. This reason is absolutely serious in its desire to destroy all that diminishes life, confining it to that which can be measured. And because it is so serious, it laughs.

REVOLT, NOT THERAPY

When the situationist idea that revolution would be therapeutic found its way into the English language, it opened a Pandora's box of misunderstanding. It seems clear to me that the situationists were pointing out that a real revolutionary rupture would break down the social constraints which underlie so much of what is considered "mental illness" and "emotional disturbance", freeing people to discover their own meanings and methods of thinking and feeling. But many have understood this concept differently, taking it to mean that revolution is to be something like an encounter group, a counseling session or psychological "self-help" activity. Ceaseless self-examination, embarrassing confessionalism, the gamut of support groups, safe spaces, and the like come to be understood as "revolutionary" activity. And many so-called revolutionaries, in conformity to such a practice, tend to become the emotionally crippled neurotics that they assume they are, searching for a revolutionary healing that will never come, because this assumed role is inherently self-perpetuating and, thus perpetuates the society that produces it. What is missing from this therapeutic conception of revolution is revolt.

The destruction of the social order with the aim of liberating

ourselves from all domination and exploitation, from every constraint on the full development of our singularity, certainly requires an analysis of how our lives, our passions, our desires and dreams have been alienated from us, how our minds have been constrained to reason in certain ways, how we have been trained to follow the logic of submission. But such an analysis must be a social analysis, not a psychoanalysis. It must be an examination of the social institutions, roles and relationships that shape the conditions under which we are forced to exist.

Consider this analogy. If a person has broken her leg, of course, she must try to set it, get a cast or splint and find a crutch. But if the reason why he is having trouble walking is that someone has put a ball and chain on his leg, then her first priority is to cut off that chain and then to guarantee that it won't happen again by destroying the source of the chain.

By accepting the idea (promoted heavily by progressive education and publicity) that the structures of oppression are essentially mindsets inside of ourselves, we become focused on our own presumed weakness, on how crippled we supposedly are. Our time is eaten up by attempts at self-healing that never come to an end, because we have become so focused on ourselves and our inability to walk that we fail to notice the chain on our leg. This endless cycle of self-analysis is not only tedious and self-indulgent; it is also utterly useless in creating a revolutionary project, because it gets in the way of social analysis and it transforms us into less capable individuals.

The therapeutic approach to social oppression ends up focusing on a myriad of "isms" with which we are infected: racism, sexism, classism, statism, authoritarianism, ablism, agism, etc., etc. Because the first two give very real and clear expression of the difference between psychoanalysis and social analysis, between the approach of therapy and that of revolt, I will examine them briefly. Viewing racism and sexism as

essentially unconscious mindsets and the behavior these produce, the nature of which we are not always aware, we are drawn onto a practice of constant self-examination, constant self-doubt, which effectively disables us, particularly in our ability to interact with the other. Racism and sexism become something nebulous, a pervasive virus which infects everyone. If one has the bad fortune of being "white" and "male" (even if one consciously rejects all the social constraints and definitions behind such labels), then he is required to accept the judgment of "non-whites" and "females" about the significance, the "real" unconscious motivations of his actions. To do otherwise would constitute arrogance, a lack of consideration and an exercise of "privilege". The only outcome I can see from such a way of dealing with these matters (and it is certainly the only outcome I have ever seen) is the creation of a bunch of shy, yet inquisitorial mice tip-toeing around each other for fear of being judged, and just as incapable of attacking the foundations of this society as they are of relating to each other.

If, on the other hand, we view racism and sexism as expressions of the social ideological constructs of race and gender which have specific institutional foundations, a very different approach applies. The concept of race as it is currently understood here in North America has its origins in the institutions of black slavery and the genocide against the indigenous people of this continent. Once established by these institutions, it became rooted into all of the power structures on one level or another due to its usefulness to the ruling class, and was trickled down to the exploited classes as a means of separating them and keeping them fighting among themselves. Sexism has its origins in the institutions of property, marriage and the family. It is here that patriarchy and male dominance have their seat. Within this framework, gender is created as a social construct, and as with race, it is the continuing usefulness of this construct to the ruling class that has kept it in place in spite of the increasingly

obvious absurdity of the institutions that are its basis. Thus, the destruction of racism and sexism must start with the explicitly revolutionary project of destroying the institutional frameworks which are the current basis for the constructs of race and gender. Such a project is not one of therapy, but of revolt. It will not be accomplished by shy, tiptoeing mice—nor by inquisitors—but by self-confident, indomitable rebels.

I won't go into the absurdity of such terms as classism or statism here because that is not my purpose. My purpose is to point out that, though revolutionary struggle may, indeed, have the "therapeutic" effect of breaking down social constraints and thus opening the mind to new ways of thinking and feeling that make one more intelligent and passionate, this is precisely because it is not therapy, which focuses on one's weakness, but a self-determined project of revolt springing from one's strength.

Freedom belongs to the individual—this is a basic anarchist principle—and as such resides in individual responsibility to oneself and in free association with others. Thus, there can be no obligations, no debts, only choices of how to act. The therapeutic approach to social problems is the very opposite of this.. Basing itself in the idea that we are crippled rather than chained, inherently weak rather than held down, it imposes an obligatory interdependence, a mutuality of incapacity, rather than a sharing of strengths and capabilities. In this, it parallels the official way of dealing with these problems. And no wonder. It is the nature of weakness to submit. If we all assume our own weakness, our perpetual internal infection by these various social diseases, then we will continue to nurture a submissive way of interacting with the world, ever ready to admit guilt, to apologize, to back down from what we've said or done. This is the very opposite of responsibility, which acts consciously with the assurance of one's projectual approach to life, ready to take the consequences of one's choices—the outlaw worthy of her

transgressions.

In the face of ten thousand years of institutional oppression, ten thousand years in which a ruling class and the structures that support its power have determined the conditions of our existence, what we need is not therapy, but strong-willed revolt aimed at developing a revolutionary project that can destroy this society and its institutions.

NEITHER INTELLECTUALISM NOR STUPIDITY

In the struggle against domination and exploitation, each individual needs to take up every tool that she can make her own, every weapon that he can use autonomously to attack this society and take back her life. Of course, which tools particular individuals can use in this way will vary depending on their circumstances, desires, capacities and aspirations, but considering the odds we face, it is ridiculous to refuse a weapon that can be used without compromising autonomy on the basis of ideological conceptions.

The rise of the civilization we live in with its institutions of domination is based on the division of labor, the process by which the activities necessary for living are transformed into specialized roles for the reproduction of society. Such specialization serves to undermine autonomy and reinforce authority because it takes certain tools—certain aspects of a *complete* individual—from the vast majority and places them in the hands of a few so-called experts.

One of the most fundamental specializations is that which created the role of the intellectual, the specialist in the use of intelligence. But the intellectual is not so much defined by intelligence as by *education*. In this era of industrial/high technological capitalism, the ruling class has little use for the full

develop and exercise of intelligence. Rather it requires expertise, the separation of knowledge into narrow realms connected only by their submission to the logic of the ruling order—the logic of profit and power. Thus, the "intelligence" of the intellectual is a deformed, fragmented intelligence with almost no capability of making connections, understanding relationships or comprehending (let alone challenging) totalities.

The specialization that creates the intellectual is in fact part of the process of stupefaction that the ruling order imposes on those who are ruled. For the intellectual, knowledge is not the qualitative capacity to understand, analyze and reason about one's own experience or to make use of the strivings of others to achieve such an understanding. The knowledge of intellectuals is completely disconnected from wisdom, which is considered a quaint anachronism. Rather, it is the capacity for remembering unconnected facts, bits of information, that has come to be seen as "knowledge". Only such a degradation of the conception of intelligence could allow people to talk of the possibility of "artificial intelligence" in relation to those information storage and retrieval units that we call computers.

If we understand that intellectualism is the degradation of intelligence, then we can recognize that the struggle against intellectualism does not consist of the refusal of the capacities of the mind, but rather of the refusal of a deforming specialization. Historically, radical movements have given many examples of this struggle in practice. Renzo Novatore was the son of a peasant who only attended school for six months. Yet he studied the works of Nietzsche, Stirner, Marx, Hegel, ancient philosophers, historians and poets, all of the anarchists writers and those involved in the various newly arising art and literature movements of his time. He was an active participant in anarchist debates on theory and practice as well as debates in radical art movements. And he did all of this in the context of an intense, active insurrectional practice. In a similar vein,

Bartolemeo Vanzetti, who started working as an apprentice in early adolescence often for long hours, describes in his brief autobiography how he would spend a good part of his nights reading philosophy, history, radical theory and so on, in order to grasp these tools that the ruling class would deny to him. It was this thirst to grasp the tools of the mind that brought him to his anarchist perspective. In the late 19th century in Florida, cigar-makers forced their bosses to hire readers to read to them as they worked. These readers read the works of Bakunin, Marx and other radical theorists to the workers who would then discuss what was read. And in the early 20th century, radical hoboes and their friends would set up "hobo colleges" where a wide variety of speakers would give talks on social questions, philosophy, revolutionary theory and practice, even science or history, and the hoboes would discuss the questions. In each of these instances, we see the refusal of the exploited to let the tools of intelligence to be taken away from them. And as I see it, this is precisely the nature of a real struggle against intellectualism. It is not a glorification of ignorance, but a defiant refusal to be dispossessed of one's capacity to learn, think and understand.

The degradation of intelligence that creates intellectualism corresponds to a degradation of the capacity to reason which manifests in the development of rationalism. Rationalism is the ideology that claims that knowledge comes from reason ***alone***. Thus, reason is separated from experience, from passion and so from life. The theoretical formulation of this separation can be traced all the way back to the philosophy of ancient Greece. Already, in this ancient commercial empire, the philosophers were proclaiming the necessity of subjugating desires and passions to a cold, dispassionate reason. Of course, this cold reason promoted moderation—in other words, ***the acceptance of what is***.

Since that time (and probably far earlier since there were

well-developed states and empires in Persia, China and India when Greece still consisted of warring city-states), rationalism has played a major role in enforcing domination. Since the rise of the capitalist social order, the process of rationalization has been spreading into all of society throughout the globe. It is therefore understandable that some anarchists would come to oppose rationality.

But that is a mere reaction. On closer examination, it becomes clear that the rationalization imposed by those in power is of a specific sort. It is the quantitative rationality of the economy, the rationality of identity and measurement, the rationality that simultaneously equates and atomizes all things and beings, recognizing no relationships except those of the market. And just as intellectualism is a deformation of intelligence, this quantitative rationality is a deformation of reason, because it is reason separated from life, a reason based on reification.

While those who rule impose this deformed rationality on social relationships, they promote irrationality among those they exploit. In the newspapers and tabloids, on television, in video and computer games, in the movies,…throughout the mass media, we can see religion, superstition, belief in the unprovable and hope in or fear of the so-called supernatural being enforced and skepticism being treated as a cold and passionless refusal of wonder. It is to the benefit of the ruling order for those it exploits to be ignorant, with a limited and decreasing capacity to communicate with each other about anything of significance or to analyze their situation, the social relationships in which they find themselves and the events going on in the world. The process of stupefaction affects memory, language and the capacity to understand relationships between people, things and events on a deep level, and this process penetrates into those areas considered intellectual as well. The inability of post-modern theorists to comprehend any totality

can easily be traced to this deformation of intelligence.

It is not enough to oppose the deformed rationality imposed by this society; we must also oppose the stupefaction and irrationality imposed by the ruling class on the rest of us. This struggle requires the reappropriation of our capacity to think, to reason, to analyze our circumstances and to communicate their complexities. It also requires that we integrate this capacity with the totality of our lives, our passions, our desires and our dreams.

The philosophers of ancient Greece lied. And the ideologues who produce the ideas that support domination and exploitation have continued to tell the same lie: that the opposite of intelligence is passion. This lie has played an essential role in the maintenance of domination. It has created a deformed intelligence that depends on quantitative, economic rationality, and it has diminished the capacity of most of the exploited and excluded to understand their condition and fight intelligently against it. But, in fact, the opposite of passion is not intelligence, but indifference, and the opposite of intelligence is not passion, but stupidity.

Because I sincerely want to end all domination and exploitation and to begin opening the possibilities for creating a world where there are neither exploited or exploiters, slaves or masters, I choose to grasp all of my intelligence passionately, using every mental weapon—along with the physical ones—to attack the present social order. I make no apologies for this, nor will I cater to those who out of laziness or ideological conception of the intellectual limits of the exploited classes refuse to use their intelligence. It is not just a revolutionary anarchist project that is at stake in this struggle; it is my completeness as an individual and the fullness of life that I desire.

THE SUBVERSION OF EXISTENCE

The desire to change the world remains merely an abstract ideal or a political program unless it becomes the will to transform one's own existence. The logic of submission imposes itself on the level of daily life offering thousands of reasons for resigning oneself to the domination of survival over life. So without a conscious project of revolt and transformation on this level, all attempts to change the world remain basically cosmetic—putting band-aids on gangrenous ulcers.

Without an intentional projectuality toward freedom and revolt here and now a myriad of potentially worthy projects—the occupation of abandoned spaces, the sharing of free food, the publication of a bimonthly anarchist periodical, sabotage, pirate radio stations, demonstrations, attacks against the institutions of domination—lose their meaning, becoming merely more hustle and bustle in a confused and confusing world. It is the conscious decision to reappropriate life in defiance of the present reality that can give these activities a revolutionary significance, because this is what provides the link between the various activities that make up an insurgent life.

Making such a decision challenges us to figure out how to realize it practically, and such a realization is not just a matter of involving ourselves in a variety of projects of action. It also, and more essentially, means creating one's life as a tension toward freedom, thus providing a context for the actions we take, a basis for analysis. Furthermore, such a decision takes our revolt beyond the political. The conscious desire for total freedom requires a transformation of ourselves and our relationships in the context of revolutionary struggle. It becomes necessary not merely to rush into this, that and the other activity,

but to grasp and learn to use all of those tools that we can take as our own and use against the current existence based on domination, in particular, analyses of the world and our activity in it, relationships of affinity and an indomitable spirit. It also becomes necessary to recognize and resolutely avoid those tools of social change offered by the current order that can only reinforce the logic of domination and submission—delegation, negotiation, petition, evangelism, the creation of media images of ourselves, and so on. These latter tools precisely reinforce hierarchy, separation and dependence on the power structure—which is the reason why they are offered to us for use in our struggles. When one resorts to these tools, revolt and freedom degenerate into a mere political program.

Analysis that does not arise from one's desire to reappropriate life here and now tends to reinforce domination, because it either remains baseless or turns to an ideology or political program as its base. A great deal of what passes for social analysis today falls into the former realm. Having no base from which they make their critique, those who follow this path tend to fall into a ceaseless round of deconstruction that ultimately concludes that domination is everywhere and nowhere, that freedom is impossible and that, therefore, we should just make the best of it either through conformity or the staged oppositional games of groups like ***Tute Bianche*** (the famous "white overalls") which are intended to challenge nothing. Arguably, this is not analysis at all, but an excuse for avoiding real analysis, and with it concrete revolt.

But the road of political ideology and programs is no more useful to the project of subversion. Because this project is the transformation of existence in a way that destroys all domination and exploitation, it is inherently ***anti-political***. Freedom, conceived politically, is either an empty slogan aimed at winning the approval of the ruled (that American "freedom" for which Bush is fighting by bombing Afghanistan and signing

increasingly repressive laws into effect) or merely one end of a continuum with domination. Freedom and domination become quantitative—matters of degree—and the former is increased by decreasing the latter. It is precisely this sort of thinking that caused Kropotkin to support the Allies in the first world war and that provides the basis for every reformist project. But if freedom is not merely a question of degrees of domination—if bigger cages and longer chains do not mean greater freedom, but merely the appearance of greater mobility within the context of continuing enslavement to the rulers of this order—then all the political programs and ideologies become useless to our project. Instead it is precisely to ourselves and our desires that we must turn—our desires for a qualitatively different existence. And the point of departure for the transformation we seek becomes our lives and relationships. It is here that we begin to undermine the logic of submission with the aim of destroying all domination. Then, our analyses of the world are aimed at achieving an under standing of how to carry out our own struggle in the world and to find points of solidarity (where we see our struggle in that of others) to spread the struggle against domination, not at creating an interpretation of the world in terms of an ideology. And our analyses of our activities are aimed at determining how useful they really are for achieving our aspirations, not at conforming our actions to any program.

If our aim is the transformation of existence, then the development of relations of affinity is not just a tactical maneuver. It is the attempt to develop relationships of freedom within the context of struggle. Relationships of freedom develop through a deep and ever increasing knowledge of the other—a knowledge of their ideas, their aspirations, their desires, their capacities, their inclinations. It is a knowledge of similarities, yes, but more significantly, it is a knowledge of differences, because it is at the point of difference that real practical knowledge begins, the knowledge of whether and how

one can carry out projects and create life with another. It is for this reason that among ourselves—as in our relationship to that which we are struggling against—it is necessary to avoid the practice of compromise and the constant search for common ground. These practices are, after all, the heart and soul of the democratic form of domination that currently rules in the world, and thus are expressions of the logic of submission that we need to eradicate from our relationships. False unities are by far a greater detriment to the development of an insurrectional project than real conflicts from which individual intelligence and creative imagination may flower brilliant. The compromise from which false unities develop is itself a sign of the submission of the insurrectional project to the political.

Unities brought about through compromise are, in fact, the very opposite of affinity since they spring from a suppression of knowledge of oneself and of the other. This is why they require the creation of formal decision-making processes that hold the seeds of a bureaucratic methodology. Where there is real knowledge of the others with whom one is carrying out a project, formal consensus is not necessary. The awareness each has of the others' individuality creates a basis where decision and action need not be separate. This is a new form of sociality that can be brought into existence here and now in struggle against the order of domination, a form of sociality grounded in the full enjoyment of the singularity of each individual, of the marvelous difference that each of us carries within ourselves.

On the basis of these relationships of affinity, real projects that reflect the desires and aims of the individuals involved, rather than simply a feeling that on must do something, can develop. Whether the project is a squat, a sharing of free food, an act of sabotage, a pirate radio station, a periodical, a demonstration, or an attack against one of the institutions of domination, it will not be entered into as a political obligation, but as a part of the life one is striving to create, as a flowering

of one's self-determined existence. And it is then and only then that its subversive and insurrectional potential blossoms. If joy and wonder, and a beautiful, indomitable existence are what we want, we need to try to achieve this here and now in rebellious defiance against all domination, eradicating the logic of submission from our lives, our relationships and our revolutionary struggle—for the destruction of politics and the creation of life without measure.

Volume Three

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PLUNDERING THE ARSENAL

"The heritage of revolutionary movements
can no longer form a tradition to safeguard…
or a program to realize,
but must become an arsenal to plunder
for the ongoing use of new revolutionaries."

The history of revolt is probably as long as the history of domination and exploitation. There have always been those who will not submit, who will defy god and master even against the greatest odds. And this history of revolt includes significant social struggles, uprisings of the multitudes of the exploited to throw off their chains in social revolution. Over the past few hundred years, these social upheavals have helped to create a revolutionary awareness that has manifested particularly in anarchist and communist theory, social analysis and practice.

This same period saw the rise of capitalism, the bourgeois revolutions that transformed the state giving rise to democratic domination (as well as other more blatantly totalitarian forms), industrialism and wage labor. But over the past sixty years or so, consequences of these transformations that were not previously fully comprehended have combined with significant ongoing changes in the ways in which domination and exploitation operate facilitated by new developments in military, police, industrial and so-called post-industrial techniques, methods and systems, developed to meet the needs of continuing social reproduction, making it necessary for clear-headed revolutionaries to develop new conceptions of the nature of the struggle against the ruling order. And

so the question arises of whether the analyses and theories of the past—and the history in which they developed—have any significance for the present anarchist movement.

Certainly, adhering to the theories and analyses of the past as revolutionary truth is useless. The veneration of Kropotkin or Bakunin, Goldman or Malatesta can only transform anarchist theory and practice into a museum piece, and museums are generally showcases for that which has died.

In the same way, an uncritical approach to past uprisings does us no good. The Paris Commune, Spain in the 1930's, Hungary in '56, Paris in '68 and so on become meaningless from a projectual revolutionary perspective when they are mythologized. The ongoing struggle from which they arose disappears, and they become relics—a string of "glorious" defeats. I have no interest in participating in the creation of a Museum of Anarchy and Insurrection. I want to create anarchy and insurrection as lived realities.

But the refusal to venerate and mythologize the revolutionary past is not the same as simply rejecting it out of hand. Just as the order of domination has a history that we can examine in order to gain a greater understanding of how to fight against it, so too the struggle against this order has a history, and to simply claim that it is irrelevant to us today is to sacrifice significant weapons that we could use in our struggle here and now.

It has been said that in order to relaunch the wager of revolution, "it is necessary to put the past back into play." But when place in a museum to be venerated or buried in a graveyard to be ignored, the past cannot be put into play, because it has been transformed from an activity, a movement of struggle, into a dead thing. The anarchists and revolutionaries of the past developed their analyses, theories and visions not as doctrines in which to believe, but as weapons to be used against the ruling order. Certainly, much of it is irrelevant now (some of it—syndicalism, workerism, formalism and the fetish of

organization and numbers, faith in progress and technology—were probably obstacles from the start), but if our intent is not merely to promote a new ideology, a new revolutionary faith; if our struggle is for the reappropriation of our lives here and now and the destruction of all that stands in the way of that project; if our aim is indeed the transformation of social relationships, the creation of a world without domination, exploitation, hierarchy…; then we will see the revolutionary past as an arsenal to be plundered, joyfully grasping whatever is useful to our present struggle. If we cannot grapple critically with the past, we will not be able to grapple critically with the present, and our current struggle will be a museum piece, a mere showcase of ideology, another game of spectacular roles that may be appealing to the media, but are of no relevance to the real struggle to destroy this society.

THE REFUSAL OF REPRESENTATION

"To represent or be represented is a degradation, a reduction, both in the sense of symbolic culture and in terms of power."—***John Zerzan***

Of course, it is inevitable in contemporary society that the mass media will broadcast its representations of anarchists and anarchy. And it is equally inevitable that these representations will be distorted and inaccurate, serving the interests of the ruling regime. After all, mass media is part of the power structure.

For this reason, it is as ridiculous to cry over the misrepresentations in the mass media as it is to make a fuss about the excessive use of violence by the cops or about political scandals. As anarchists, we should realize that it is the very existence of cops, governments and mass media that we oppose, not just their excesses.

In this light, attempts to manipulate media representation of anarchists have to be seen in the same light as attempts to hold the police and politicians accountable—that is, as reformist activity. Attempts by anarchists to manipulate the image of the anarchist in the media stem from an idealistic, evangelistic conception of how revolt develops and spreads. It is assumed, in this conception, that people first come to adhere to some ideology of revolt and that this ideology moves them to rise up. It, thus, becomes important to win as many people as possible to anarchist ideas in order to move them to revolt in our way. We need not even take into account the fact that historically not one revolt has started from an essentially ideological basis in order to see the fallacy of this way of thinking. To view revolt in this way is to keep it in the realm of the quantitative, the ideological and the representational—that is, within the bounds of the methodology of this society. It is not only impossible for us to accomplish the anarchist project in this way, but when we use these sorts of methods, we have already defeated ourselves by transforming our lives and projects into images, into mere representations that are, indeed, degradations.

The fact that millions of people may see the New York Times or network television does not mean that we should seek to get an "accurate" representation in these media. An accurate representation of a living struggle against domination or of anything truly living and passionate is impossible; inevitably what will be seen will be a deformation in the interests of domination. Even when we turn our own means of communication—our publications, pirate radio stations, etc.—into tools for propaganda, ways of winning people over, this degradation starts to creep in, because instead of being ourselves and acting on our own terms, we begin to represent ourselves and act to win the hearts and minds of others. This is indeed degradation, as revolution and anarchy cease to be our life struggle and instead become a political

program in search of adherents.

So if we are to refuse all representation, we must start by refusing to cooperate with any attempt to represent us, as well as refusing to make ourselves into an image, a representation. Though we can't prevent the media from representing anarchists and anarchy, we can refuse to play along with their game, just as we can refuse to vote or to join the military. These abstentions are all refusals to cooperate with the power structure, refusals to let our lives and activities be defined on their terms

To look at the matter from another direction, striving for self-management of the current social order is both ridiculous and counter-revolutionary, since real, full self-determination of our lives requires the destruction of this order. In the same way the attempt to self-manage one's media image also runs counter to any truly revolutionary project, because it places one's struggle squarely within the framework of representation in its most flagrant and degraded form. As with the state, the cops, capital—as with all institutions of domination—the only revolutionary relationship an anarchist can have with the mass media is a conflictual one clearly aimed at its destruction and brooking no compromise. In relation to the media, this is the minimum meaning of the refusal of representation.

AVOIDING MORAL VANGUARDISM

"What power fears most is anonymous, generalized rebellion. […] by the use of monograms and programmes we see the creation of an identity that separates revolutionaries from the rest of the exploited, making them visible to power and putting themselves in a condition that lends itself to representation."

—from ***At Daggers Drawn***

Anarchists have generally agreed that a world free of authority, hierarchy and domination could not be created using vanguardist means. Thus, anarchists have usually avoided the formation of political parties or similar organizational forms to "lead the people" to revolt.* But other subtle forms of vanguardism can easily creep into our methods and practice if care is not taken to avoid them.

Probably the most widespread form of vanguardism in anarchist circles is that which proposes a kind of evangelistic educational practice intended to spread anarchist ideas among the exploited classes. But I have discussed the problems with this approach before and want to examine another form of subtle vanguardism: moral vanguardism.

In the struggle against the institutions of domination, attack is essential. The social relationships that enforce this social order must be overturned, and this requires the destruction of the projects and structures of the ruling order. While it is true that in order to move toward social insurrection and revolution, such attacks must expand and become generalized, it is absurd to use this necessity as an excuse for doing nothing now. Facing this social reality that is impoverishing our lives and poisoning this world, every act of revolt is justified. But where widespread social insurrection does not exist, it is of great importance not to create a role or image of what one comrade called "specialists in destruction" and "specialists in revolution" for ourselves.

There are a number of factors that can play into creating this specialist role. Since acts of vandalism, sabotage and destructive attack are, in fact, relatively common responses to alienation, frustration with the realities of social existence and

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* I have little knowledge of the nature of the "Liberal Party" started by the Magon brothers in Mexico in the early 1900's as part of that revolution, but the "Organizational Platform" developed in 1926 by the group *Dielo Trouda* had vanguardist connotations clear enough to cause most anarchists of that time to oppose it.

boredom with a life where most relationships are commodified and most adventures outlawed, it is clearly not the fact that conscious revolutionaries and anarchists carry out such acts that leads to this specialization. Rather the problem lies in the way in which social, political or moral agenda behind the attacks are dealt with.

Exploited individuals without a conscious revolutionary perspective who attack something that diminishes their existence are acting only for themselves in the immediate present and so feel no need to communicate the reasons for their actions. Anarchists and revolutionaries—though hopefully also acting for themselves—carry out their actions in the context of an ongoing project of revolt, and so they often have reasons for wanting to communicate why they took a particular action. So communiqués, signed or not, are issued explaining why a particular act of sabotage, vandalism, arson and so on occurred.

Just as it would be too simple to merely reject this sort of action, it would also be too simple to reject the use of communiqués. In specific circumstances, attacks of this sort with a corresponding explanation may be quite significant in the expansion of social struggle. But if such communications create and/or reinforce a separation between conscious anarchists and the exploited, they become an obstruction in the path of generalized revolt and self-organization.

In the United States, the most common attacks made by anarchists and revolutionaries in recent years have involved the sabotage of environmentally destructive enterprises, animal experimentation and the development of genetically engineered organisms. Communiqués have played a major part in making these actions known. At the same time, the wording of the communiqués, the ways in which they are signed and even the ways in which the actions themselves are communicated often leave a general impression of groups that

specialize in the use of sabotage and arson in defense of the earth and its "defenseless" non-human creatures. If the repeated use of specific names in connection with these actions helps to reinforce this image of specialization, what is probably far more significant in separating those who carry out these actions from the exploited and their struggles is the moralistic language that is so frequently used in the communiqués. The image put forth is that of a moral vanguard of earth defenders and animal defenders putting themselves on the line in defense of the defenseless. It may be that most people who are carrying out these actions do not see themselves in this way, but their communiqués often reinforce this image by substituting moral arguments for a thorough analysis of the relationship of these specific aspects of exploitation to the totality of this exploitative society.

> *"The fact that the occupiers center the outcome of their actions of self-organization egoistically around themselves is the best guarantee of the authenticity of what they say."*
> —*from* ***Against the Legalization of Occupied Spaces***

The various acts of sabotage, vandalism, reappropriation and other forms of revolt carried out by exploited individuals who do not describe themselves as "revolutionary" or "anarchist" have their basis in the very egoist desire o take back their own lives and find their own pleasures and adventures. Often the situation in which such actions take place encourage an expansive egoism in which collective self-organization provides the basis for trust. Those with causes may change their cause at any time – in line with the latest political fad – and will be viewed by most of the exploited like any other politician.

If we anarchists would also act above all for ourselves against our own domination and exploitation, this would provide us with an authentic basis for expressing the reasons

behind our actions. If our analyses provide us with a clearer understanding of how and why to act against domination, our actions will, nonetheless, not be those of a vanguard, but of expansive egoists seeking others with whom we can create that that insurrection that will be the collective self-organization of the individual struggle for freedom.

NO ACT OF REVOLT IS FUTILE

Class struggle exists in all of the individual and collective acts of revolt in which small portions of life are taken back or small portions of the apparatus of domination and exploitation are obstructed, damaged or destroyed. In a significant sense, there are no isolated acts of revolt. All such acts are responses to the social situation, and many involve some level of implicit complicity, indicating some level of collective struggle. Consider, for example the spontaneous, mostly unspoken organization of the reappropriation of goods and sabotage of the work process that goes on at many workplaces; this informal coordination of subversive activity carried out in the interest of each individual involved is the best anarchist conception of collective activity, because this sort of collectivity exists to serve the interests and desires of each of the individuals involved in reappropriating their lives and carries within it a conception of different ways of relating free of exploitation andv domination. But even apparently lone acts of revolt have their social aspects and are part of the general struggle of the exploited. Both for this reason and because of the personal sense of joy and satisfaction that the individual finds in such acts, it needs to be recognized that

Capital, the state and their technological apparatus constitute a worldwide social order of domination. It is therefore necessary for the rebellious struggles of individuals to come together in

order to create social revolution. Since even individual acts of revolt have a social aspect and are often more collective in nature than they appear due to implicit complicity, such a development is not so far-fetched should the right circumstances arise. But to be very clear, I am not talking about waiting until the right circumstances occur to act (all too often an excuse for passivity), but rather about seizing the opportunity in the ongoing practice of revolt of taking it further whenever one can.

Social revolution is a rupture with our current mode of existence, an upheaval of social conditions and relationships in which the functioning of political and economic institutions break down. As I see it, the aim of anarchists in this situation is to struggle for the complete destruction of these institutions—the state, property, work, commodity exchange, the technology of social control, every institution of domination—in order to open the field of possibilities for self-organization. Thus, the revolutionary project is essentially negative and destructive. Our aim is not to create counter-institutions to replace the state and capital, but to put an end to the current global situation in which a few determine the conditions under which everyone lives, so that every individual becomes free to create life on their own terms in association with whom they choose. So it is not a political struggle, an attempt to put a political program into effect, but rather a ***social*** struggle. It is fitting for a movement that opposes all hierarchy and leadership that we should not offer models for a post-revolutionary society. In fact, ideally, there would be no "after the revolution", but rather an ongoing tension of expanding possibilities, a fluidity of social and asocial relationships that refuse to congeal into institutions but rather center around the creation of desires, interests, projects and passions always based on the conscious refusal to be ruled. Thus, I am talking of a total transformation on all levels of existence that never ends, a leap into the unknown of freedom that offers no guarantees except those

that may be found in the resolute determination of every individual never to be ruled again.

AGAINST COMPROMISE

Compromise is always a matter of renunciation, of giving something up. Therefore, those who portray the refusal of compromise as a closing down of possibilities are perpetrating a swindle, a precise reversal of reality. Compromise functions through reduction. Each individual gives up a bit of herself here, a crumb there, and on and on until all that was, in fact, individual is worn away, and everyone is a cipher equal to each other, an equality defined as each being nothing.

The only possibilities that can exist in such a situation are those that are acceptable (or at least bearable) to all. In this way, the possibility of exploring anything new, any initiatives that open out to elsewhere, is subject to the exigencies of the survival of the group as a whole. Every group formed through compromise, through coming to an agreement by renouncing differences exists in a precarious balance. The repressed singularity of each of its members surges below the surface. And so the unknown—whether a catastrophe striking from the outside or a new initiative from within the group, a proposal to experiment—is always a threat to such groups. Therefore, for the most part, they avoid experimentation, stick to the agreed upon program and only carry out "initiatives" that are really just simple repetitions, maybe with minor adjustments, of what they have always done, in other words, rituals. Doing anything else could create a rupture that would allow the full deluge of difference, of individual desires, passions, ideas and dreams, to burst forth actively in the world with all the conflict this would inevitably involve.

The groups that are brought together by a coercive necessity imposed by the ruling order—nation-states, workplaces, bureaucracies, etc.—maintain their balance through laws, rules, chains of command, methods of discipline and correction, punishments and methods of isolating those who do not conform. Because the state and capital do not allow any "outside" to exist anywhere in the world, the coercive institutions through which they operate are imposed upon everyone, and so force everyone to compromise to some extent. Thus, for example, in order to fulfill our needs and desires and to carry out our projects, those of us who desire a world without money, property or commodity exchange are forced by the current social order to deal with all of these things on one level or another—by working, by stealing, by begging, by offering goods and services in exchange for whatever it is we want. But coerced compromise can nonetheless be met defiantly and with dignity, and one's singularity is maintained in this defiant attitude.

Having to deal daily with the humiliation of the coerced compromises imposed by the ruling order, certainly in our struggle against it we do not want to leave any place for compromise. Since this struggle is precisely against domination and exploitation, it is the place for experimenting freedom. And from an anarchist perspective (by which I mean a perspective that rejects all domination, all hierarchy, all authority), this means the freedom of each individual to determine her own life in free association with whom he chooses. Of course, this rules out any negotiation with the state or other ruling institutions. If we compromise with the ruling order in the way we carry out our struggle, then we are already defeated, because such a compromise would place the determination of the conditions of our supposed struggle against this social order into the hands of those whose interests it serves. They would define our opposition;

they would define our struggle. Autonomy would cease to be anything more than a fine-sounding abstract word to be flung around for the warm feeling it gives us.

A sad example of what I mean can be seen in what happened to the occupations struggle in Europe when a significant portion of this movement decided to "struggle" for legalization. What had originated as a movement of direct action and self-organization was largely transformed into a movement for social assimilation and state assistance. Those occupied spaces that refused to have any dialogue with the state often found themselves isolated, and in several instances—Germany providing the most profound example—the movement for legalization effectively provided the basis for crushing the occupations movement. In addition, the assimilation inherent in these negotiations has led to the disappearance of opposition or its deformation into purely symbolic and spectacular forms (the now disbanded ***Tute Bianche***, which originated in legalized social centers in northern Italy, being a prime example of the latter).

But in the process of carrying out our revolutionary project it is equally important to refuse to base our relationships with our comrades on compromise. If indeed our aim is really the liberation of every individual so that each can determine her own life on her own terms with those with whom he feels affinity (and what else could the rejection of all domination be?), then there is no place for renunciation in the name of a greater good and, thus, no place for compromise. This does not mean that each individual must be isolated from every other individual. Clearly, in order to carry out activities together, we need to discuss our aims, our desires, our needs, our ideas, our aspirations. But the aim of such discussion—if we are seeking a world of free relationships—would not be to create a common ground through the denial of real differences, reducing everything to the lowest common denominator.

Rather it would aim to clarify the differences, to bring out the singular desires and dreams of each individual involved, to discover the commonality that springs from our enjoyment of each others' singularity (without forgetting that we will not enjoy everyone's singular being), the commonality that is based on real affinity between unique individuals. Such affinity can only be discovered through developing a real deep knowledge of each other, a task which requires that our discussions have the precise aim of discovering our differences, what is unique in each of us, not of suppressing them in the name of a unity that will leave everyone dissatisfied.

The rejection of compromise in our struggle goes hand in hand with the rejection of formality. In order to create a formal organization, it is necessary to create both an ideological framework and a practical program on which the organization is based. The ideological framework marks the boundaries within which theoretical and analytical exploration is permitted, and the practical program marks the boundaries within which practical initiative and projects are to operate. Individuals who wish to participate in the organization must pare down their individuality in order to fit within these boundaries, renouncing those parts of themselves that do not serve the greater good of the organization as a whole. Thus, by its nature, the formal group comes to dominate the individuals who participate in it. Since this domination of the group over the individual stems from the boundaries set by the ideological framework and practical program that are the defining traits (along with membership roles and the quantitative delusion), one can say that it reflects the closing down of possibilities that is inherent in compromise.

While we anarchists are quick to discuss which methods of decision-making are most suited to our aims, we seem far less willing to talk about the contexts in which these methods are to be used. Within the context of a formal organization in

which the theoretical and practical parameters of discussion are already set and the individuals involved in the decision-making process are members of the organization, i.e., parts of a greater whole, both unanimity* and majority decision can only operate as a power over individuals in the group, since every decision must be made in terms of the needs of the organization as a whole. Thus, whatever decision may be reached through whatever method, it will always involve the submission of the individual and her desires and aspirations to the group as a whole.

In the realm of informality, where organization is temporary, with the aim of accomplishing a specific task, discussion does not have such parameters, the only parameters being the task at hand. Individuals can bring the whole of themselves, their dreams and passions, their ideas and desires, the whole of their imaginations into it. Since there is no formal structure the survival of which must be guaranteed, there is nothing to fetter the exploration of possibilities. Discussion can center around how to carry out whatever project is being explored in such a way as to realize the desires of each of the individuals involved in carrying it out. In this informal context, at least if it is to realize the singularity of each individual, there is obviously no place for a majority-based method of decision-making. Unanimity is necessary simply because it is the only way to guarantee that the decisions made fully reflect each individual involved. In this case, wholeness is not seen as the trait of a group, but rather of each individual involved in the project at hand, who have come together on the basis of affinity, not unity in the name of a higher cause (even if that cause is called "revolution" or "anarchy"). So when significant differences arise there is no need to resolve them through negotiation

* This method is better known in the United States as consensus, but I prefer this term since it distinguishes the method from *social consensus*, and in my mind lacks certain collectivist connotations that I associate with consensus for reasons discussed below.

and compromise. Rather those involved can recognize that they have reached the limits of their affinity and can therefore chose to go their separate ways continuing their struggles as they see fit. So though it is true that within a formal context even unanimity is guaranteed to be a power over individuals, within the context of informality it can be a tool for creating collective projects in which the interests of each individual involved have priority.

As an anarchist, I desire social revolution precisely because it opens the possibility for creating a world in which each individual is able to create her life as his own in free association with those with whom she feels affinity. Social revolution is, in fact, a rupture of existing social relationships, a breakdown of the functioning of social control and so opens out into the unknown, where possibilities for freedom and self-organization may be found. Formal "revolutionary" organizations and "alternative" institutions are formed precisely to avoid this opening into the unknown. How often have I heard some anarchist proclaim the necessity to find something to replace the state and capitalist institutions, as if these have ever served any truly human purpose! But the built-in limitations of these "revolutionary" institutions guarantee not too much will change. They are brakes on the upheaval that is bringing the collapse of the old world. And so they close down possibilities, enclosing them within their own framework, and the world of compromise returns, often with the added brutality of the moral judgments of true believers against those who go too far. The expansion of the possibilities opened up by the insurrectionary break, the full exploration of the panorama of self-determination and of the "collective movement of individual realization", requires, above all, indomitable individuals who associate on the basis of affinity and the pleasure they find in each others' singularity, refusing every compromise.

REVOLUTIONARY SOLIDARITY:
An insurrectionary anarchist perspective

"Solidarity lies in action. Action that sinks its roots in one's own project[…] that above all makes us free ourselves…"
—Daniela Carmignani

Revolutionary solidarity is not essentially a question of moral, financial or physical support, but something far deeper, because it is essentially egoistically centered. The basis for revolutionary solidarity lies in recognizing one's own project of revolt in the struggles and actions of others and thus seeing these others, at least potentially, as accomplices in struggle.

Therefore, revolutionary solidarity can only exist when one has a clear project of revolt from which it can sprout. The nature of the insurrectionary anarchist project is the reappropriation of one's own life in open conflict with every form of domination and exploitation; it is the overturning of existing social relationships and the destruction of all hierarchy and authority and of the commodity system with the aim of opening the fullest possibilities for free association. It is this that forms the basis from which I, as an exploited individual fighting to take back my life and a conscious insurrectionary anarchist, determine and express revolutionary solidarity.

From this it should be clear that I see no possibility for solidarity between insurrectionary anarchists and any group that claims to lead, represent or even (like so many politicians of the democratic left) serve any struggle. In their specialized role as spokespeople for (their version of) whatever specific struggle, hierarchy and authority already exist. They are contenders for power and, thus, its practical accomplices. So it

shouldn't be surprising that at one point or another, the leaders of these groups begin to make demands of the current rulers, demands that are the first step to negotiation and taking one's place within the current social order.

But every social struggle has many different layers and facets. While various political, union or guerrilla groups strive to impose their "service" on the struggles of the exploited and excluded, many individuals go on carrying out their struggles autonomously, organizing their attempts to take back their lives and attack what stands in their way in free association with others of their choosing. In any struggle, we find our accomplices, those with whom we can act in solidarity, among these individuals.

And what does it mean to act in solidarity with others in struggle? Above all, it means to carry on our own struggle against every form of domination and exploitation where we are. The stat, capital and all the institutions through which they exercise their power constitute a totality, and every attack on a part, even the tiniest subversion, the least expression of self-organized revolt, is an attack on the whole. But there are points where my struggle more specifically intersects with that of others. This is where solidarity can have its clearest expressions. Consider, for example, the uprising that began in Argentina last December. It was sparked by economic policies put into play by specific institutions. These institutions have offices, functionaries, properties and connections with other institutions throughout the world and exercise their exploitative practices everywhere. Specifically target actions against these institutions and their connections anywhere in the world could provide a clear expression of solidarity with those in revolt in Argentina. Similarly, solidarity with prisoners' struggles could find expression in attacks against institutions, corporations and functionaries involved in the prison industry that are often involved in other exploitative projects that affect all of our lives.

The possibilities are as broad as our imaginations.

In the same way, solidarity with anarchists who have been imprisoned is manifested by acting as their accomplices, continuing our struggles against the state and capital, the source of their imprisonment. Taking action that makes the link of complicity between our revolt and that of our imprisoned comrades obvious only requires a bit of knowledge and creativity.

Revolutionary solidarity is the active expression of a link between projects of struggle and revolt. It is a relationship of complicity, not of service or support (though under specific circumstances, in the context of mutual aid between comrades, one might incorporate some form of support into a relationship of solidarity). One enters into it in terms of one's own project, without compromise. Thus, as an insurrectionary anarchist, as an individual in revolt against every form of domination, exploitation and hierarchy, my solidarity is always only with those aspects of a struggle in which individuals act autonomously to take back their own lives and organize their own relationships and activities freely, striving to destroy everything that obstructs these attempts, particularly the organizations and leaders who claim to represent the struggle.

ON THE PRACTICE OF THEORY

One of the foundations of the world in which we live (and to which anarchists want to put an end) is the division of labor, particularly the division between intellectual and manual labor. Many anarchists carry this division into their own projects, speaking of theory and practice as two separate aspects of anarchist activity and, in some cases, going so far as to proudly reject theory as the realm of intellectual specialization.

From an anarchist perspective, revolution is a complete overturning of current social relationships, a total transformation of existence. It follows from this that, for the individual anarchist, each project would be an experiment aimed at transforming one's relationships with oneself, with other people and with the surrounding world here and now in terms of one's revolutionary aspirations. Thus, the development of an insurrectional project involves the rejection of this division of labor and the consequent recognition that the development of revolutionary theory is itself a practice, a fundamental rupture with the normal way of encountering the world, a transformation of how we relate to it.

As I see it, the basic aim of social revolution is the reappropriation of life in its totality so that every individual can determine the course of her existence on her own terms in association with whom he chooses. Currently, a few people determine the conditions under which everyone must exist, operating through a network of institutions, structures and systems that define social relationships – particularly (but not exclusively) the state and commodity exchange. This imposition of determined, circumscribed relationships penetrates into the realm of thought in the form of ideology.

Ideology can be briefly defined as a predetermined and circumscribed set of flattened ideas through which one views and interprets the world. Ideological thought may be relatively internally consistent or utterly incoherent. Marxist-leninists and religious fundamentalists tend to see everything through a single, rigid lens, while the "average" person on the street will have a mish-mash of contradictory ideologies through which he interprets her experiences. In fact, outside of the realm of a small minority of "true believers", a lack of coherence, which makes action for oneself impossible, is a mark of ideological thinking. But most significantly, ideological thinking is passive thinking, thinking in terms that have been determined beforehand by those currently in power, their "oppositional"

competitors or the various opinion-making, consensus-building apparati that serve them. In this predetermined social relationship, one does not really think, but merely passively consumes the thoughts that one is offered.

A revolutionary practice of theory begins with an overturning of ideology. The desire to take back one's life, to determine the conditions of one's existence, requires a new understanding of the world, what some have called a "reversal of perspective". This understanding that distinguishes theory from ideology is the realization that this world, with is institutional framework and its circumscribed, hierarchical social relationships, is actually produced by our activity, by our continued resigned acceptance of the roles and relationships imposed upon us. Once we realize that our activity creates this world, the possibility of creating a different world, one based on our desire to be the conscious creators of our own lives, becomes clear. And so we come to face the task of analyzing the world in which we live with the aim of realizing our aspiration to reappropriate our lives and re-create the world on our own terms. This process of thinking critically about the social relationships that are imposed on us, the historical processes of domination and revolt and our own actions taken against this world is theoretical practice.

So the practice of theory already initiates the process of taking back one's life, because it is the reappropriation of one's capacity to think for oneself. It is not a matter of opposing a refusal of reason to rationalism, a mere ideological reversal that plays into the hands of the ruling class. Rather, realizing that rationalism is the imposition of a single, dispassionate Reason (the Reason of the state and the market) on all of us, we develop a practice of attacking this single Reason and the institutions that impose it with the multitude of passionate reasons that spring from our desires, aspirations and dreams when they escape the logic of the market and the state. The

reversal of perspective through which we come to see the real possibility of transforming our existence makes thinking critical, turns reason into a tool of revolutionary desire and transforms social and historical analysis into weapons for attacking the social order. But only if we are willing to take up the task of thinking deeply, of reasoning passionately for ourselves, in short, of creating theory.

Since revolutionary theoretical practice, from an anarchist perspective, must be the active, critical overturning of the social relationships of ideology and of intellectual specialization, since it must be the reappropriation of our capacity to think for the project of our own liberation, it cannot be the activity of a few recognized theorists who create ideas for others to consume and act upon. Rather theory must be made by everyone. This opposes the creation of a single unified anarchist theory, since this would require the flattening out of all that is vital, passionate and unique in each individual's thinking and would transform theory into a set of doctrines that would put an end to theoretical activity by providing a final answer, the usefulness of which would cease the moment it was declared. It also opposes activism and militantism which separate action from theory, disdainfully attributing the latter to "armchair intellectuals in their ivory towers". This attitude reflects a complete acceptance of the division of labor imposed by this society, and, therefore, leaves those who take this stance subject to incoherent, often unconsciously held ideologies —such as humanitarianism, social obligation, democratic tolerance, political correctitude, justice, rights, etc. – that send them spinning off into a jumble of contradictory activities from which the most basic anarchist principles are frequently missing, an alternative form of the mindless busyness through which most people carry out the tasks of social reproduction.

The creation of revolutionary theory is, thus, a practice aimed at the destruction of the current social relationships of

specialization, division of labor and expertise so that each of us can take back our own lives, and this aim must exist already in the way we carry out this practice, which is to see that each of us must think for ourselves. Those who refuse this practice are choosing to continue to live and act in a mostly unconscious and reactive manner. In other words, they are choosing to remain slaves. One who is serious about putting an end to our slavery knows that this requires each of us to take up the task of being complete human beings capable of acting, feeling and thinking for ourselves. And until we destroy the ruling order of the state and capital, this means consciously taking up the practice of theory with all the effort that entails.

ON THE AIMS AND METHODS OF CRITIQUE

The development of a coherent anarchist practice based on our desire to take back our lives requires the ongoing use of critical analysis on all levels. But, as with the totality of anarchist practice, critique is only useful when one is clear about the aims of the practice and develops methods consistent with those aims. Here as in all other areas of practice, our means need to embody our ends.

For the sake of simplicity and clarity, we can speak of three general areas in which critical analysis is necessary: 1) the critique of the present society, of the institutions, systems and relationships that produce and maintain domination and exploitation; 2) historical critique, the critical examination of struggles, insurrections and revolutionary theory and practice of the past; and 3) the critique of the ideas and practices of the contemporary anarchist movement.

The critique of the present society, of the institutions and relationships of domination, has a very simple aim, that of

achieving an understanding of our enemy that is sufficient for the project of destroying it and opening the possibility for free and self-determined living. The method best suited to this aim is one of incisive, iconoclastic attack. Slogans and simplistic proclamations are not enough. It is necessary to examine the practices of the state, capital and all the other institutions of domination deeply. This examination needs to start from our desire to take back our lives as individuals and develop relationships based on free association, and the consequent necessity to reappropriate life on the social level as well. This means examining the ways in which the ruling institutions penetrate into and come to define our daily lives. In fact, the examination of daily life is of primary importance, because this is where one can develop an ongoing practice of conflict with the forces of domination, discovering the weak points that one can attack as an aspect of living one's life. This is also where one could meet those individuals who may not call themselves anarchists or revolutionaries, but who consistently live in defiance against this ruled existence and so may prove to be the most trustworthy of accomplices in revolt. Of course, in the development of this critique, we can make use of a myriad of tools, including those which we steal from such academic and scientific pursuits as anthropology and philosophy. But these should never become models for a future society or the center of our critique. If they do, they become ideological chains rather than critical tools of our desire to reappropriate our lives and transform existence in terms of our needs desires and aspirations.

The aim of an anarchist historical critique is to reappropriate the history of the struggle against domination as an unfinished task, to examine the insurrections and revolutions of the past as part of our ongoing struggle so that what can grasp what is useful from them. The appropriate method for carrying this aim out is the demystification of history. I do not mean by this

the replacement of "objectively" false visions of the past with "objectively" true ones. Rather I mean the transformation of our conception of history. The "History" that we were taught in school is a string of events (often perceived as a progression) placed on display like exhibits in a museum. Whether "accurate" or not, this represents a mystification in the fullest sense of the word, because it defines History as a thing above us that cannot be touched. The most common radical response to this view is that developed by certain Marxists and Hegelians in which the hand of History is not the dead past, but a determined and inevitable future. Since this also places history above us in a sacred, untouchable realm, it is still a mystification. The demystification of history is the recognition that it is nothing more nor less than the activity of human beings doing what is necessary to create their lives and world. Because this activity is mostly unconscious, the rulers are able to control it in their own interests and create the mystified history that supports their continued control. Insurrections are moments when the apparatus of historical mystification breaks down and people begin to see themselves as the protagonists of their own existence, raising the fundamental question of how to go about creating our lives consciously for ourselves. In this light, all past insurrections are part of an ongoing struggle. Their faults and failures are not tales of tragic heroism and defeat, but rather lessons to be drawn on in the continuing struggle for the reappropriation of our lives. So historical critique in an anarchist and revolutionary sense is the examination of those moments when historical mystifications break down and the fundamental questions of how to create our lives for ourselves begin to be raised, with the explicit aim of reopening these questions now in our own lives in order to be better prepared when the next insurrectional rupture occurs. Of course, without any illusions that there can be any guaranteed solutions when we step into the unknown of insurrection and the creation of free existence.

Our critical interaction with each other, dealing with current ideas and practices, would ideally be aimed at sharpening our theory and practice and clarifying affinities and real differences so that each of us can advance our projects of revolt in association with others with whom we share real affinity. Thus the aim is most certainly not to achieve theoretical and tactical unity as some anarchists proclaim, but rather to maintain the vitality that comes from immersion in the struggle against this social order, a vitality capable of fierce argument and a real conflict of ideas without the necessity of rancor or defensiveness of an entrenched position. The appropriate method for this critique is deep, passionate, intelligent debate of actual ideas and practices carried out with transparency. In order to do this, we must keep our debate in the realm of actual ideas and practices. Thus, in our debates, we want to avoid stylistic judgments and characterizations—describing an idea as "academic", "arrogant", "dogmatic" or the like is not a critique of the idea, but only of its style. We want to avoid creating monoliths where they do not exist, because such constructions cause the actual question under debate to get lost behind the non-existent sect one has constructed. This also occurs when one brings an extraneous person or group into the debate and attributes their ideas to one's opponent. The original matter under debate disappears again behind a fictitious construction. I could go into more methods used to avoid real debate: personal insults and accusations, the leftist doctrine of collective guilt and responsibility, arguing against someone's form to discredit their ideas, "critique" of what someone did not do rather than of anything they did, etc., etc. All of these practices take the debate out of the realm of real ideas and practices and move them into the realm of the fictitious and often the ideological. In so doing the aims of this sort of critique get lost. When the real ideas and practices of individuals get lost behind the battles of the ideological giants, theory and practice are blunted, worn down to fit into the

various ideological constructs that represent the sides of this battle. Real affinities and differences are overshadowed by the necessity to adhere to a side in these false debates. And, indeed, we are all called upon to take sides, even when we find none of the options appealing and would rather simply go our own way creating our projects of revolt on our own terms. And, indeed, only by walking away from the false debates can we enter back into real critical interaction with those willing to consciously refuse the methods for avoiding real debate.

Of course, this division of critical activity into three areas was simply done for simplicity's sake. In fact, these aspects of critique are intimately united each flowing into the other as part of the transformative activity of the struggle against this society. To maintain the vitality of our critical activity, of our analyses, our debates and our creation of theory, we must carefully avoid every tendency toward the reification of these activities. We must avoid the idea that we have found the answer, that we need no longer explore or question, but need only convince others that we are right and that they should follow our perspective (how far off is this from being leaders and authorities?). I am not suggesting that we should lack confidence in our ideas, but rather that we should continue to explore and question everything—including our own ideas and practice—with a cruel and incisive eye. Because it is our life and our freedom that is at stake.

ON BEING WHO WE SAY WE ARE

I call myself an anarchist not because the word sounds good, nor because it will make me appear more radical, nor even merely because I desire the disappearance of the state (even Lenin claimed that he ultimately desired this much… when the time was ripe). I call myself an anarchist because I have chosen to go about my struggle against the world of domination in a particular way. In these times when the degradation of language drains words of their content, undermining the capacity for meaningful dialogue, it is particularly important for anarchists to maintain the significance of this term.

It has been rightly said that "anarchism is not a concept that can be locked up in a word like a gravestone". But this is not because it can mean anything, but rather because, as the same writer said, "it is a way of conceiving life, and life…is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day." The anarchist is one who chooses to play this stake on her own terms to the extent that this is possible. In particular, the anarchist is one who chooses to carry on his ***struggle*** on her own terms, without any room for compromise or negotiation with the ruling institutions. This refusal does not stem from a desire for purity, as some have tried to claim, but from the recognition that any compromise on the field of struggle would be a further relinquishment of the lives that have already been stolen from us, the lives we are struggling to take back.

Perhaps the most basic anarchist principle, the one from which all the others spring, is the recognition that freedom can only be realized ***in freedom***, that self-determination—that is to say, the creation of lives that are truly ***our own***—can only

be won through a struggle that is truly ***our own***. This is what is meant when we say that our ends must exist in the means we use to achieve them.

This principle is not merely a fine, ethical stance. Above all, it is a hard lesson that has been brought home over and over again in every revolutionary experience. Compromise with the ruling institutions, with the so-called oppositional institutions that claim to represent the people in struggle or with any form of hierarchy or representation is always the death of the struggle against all domination. Such compromises are the points where either the old power begins to establish itself (as in France in 1968) or the new power begins to take hold (as in Russia after the October 1917 revolution). So this principle, in fact, has a solid foundation.

But this principle is also the primary distinction between an ***anarchist*** revolutionary perspective and any other revolutionary perspective. All forms of communism call for the eventual withering away of the state. But an anarchist perspective recognizes that the state and every other institution must be rejected from the start, because institutions usurp the capacity of people for self-organization. And it is here that the anarchist wager—the staking of one's life spoken of above—comes into play. Having not merely called for the eventually end of the state, the institutions of domination and all hierarchy and representation, but having also rejected them here and now as means for carrying out one's revolutionary struggle, one has no choice but to actually pursue a methodology that relies only on oneself and one's trusted comrades, a methodology based in autonomy and self-organization, direct action in its true sense—i.e., acting directly to achieve one's aims for oneself—and total conflict with the ruling order.

Quite clearly there is no place in such a choice for voting, for petitioning the state, for litigation, for promoting legislation of any sort or for fooling oneself that any means by which one

legally gains one's survival in any way reflects an anarchist or revolutionary perspective. But to fully comprehend what it means to carry out one's struggle in a self-organized manner, it is necessary to recognize the full extent of the institutions of domination. If one refuses to vote because one rejects the idea of being represented, then logically one would also refuse to talk to New York Times journalists or television reporters for precisely the same reason. The image they paint of the anarchist is also a representation, and the argument that we should talk to them in order to put out a more accurate representation follows the same logic as that which calls us to vote in order to get better representation in the halls of government. The anarchists in Greece who smash television cameras and attack journalists have a much better idea of how to deal with the misrepresentations of the media.

The economic blackmail of capitalist society will force us to make some compromises in terms of how we get the things we need to live (even robbing a bank is a compromise, since, in fact, we'd rather live without money and banks or the system that creates them). There is not currently a strong enough movement of social subversion to counteract this, one in which the taking and sharing of goods is a widespread, festive practice. But in terms of our various social and personal struggles against this society, no such coercion exists, and one can choose to struggle as an anarchist—refusing to turn to any of the institutions of domination to accomplish the tasks we consider necessary to accomplish the social transformation we desire. Such a refusal means rejecting all the various ideologies and practices of the capitalist cult of efficiency for its own sake—the quantitative illusions that judges a movement in terms of numbers of participants, the pragmatic acceptance of "whatever works", the fetish of organization which creates invisible hierarchies with its theoretical and practical programs to which people are to adhere. Thus, from an anarchist perspective, the phrase "by

any means necessary" becomes counter-revolutionary. It is the opening of the door to the Reign of Terror or the slaughter at Kronstadt.

So if it is to mean anything when we call ourselves anarchists, we need to keep this primary principle in mind: our struggle against this world must be completely our own. Of course, this is no simple task. It requires a the use of practical imagination in order to figure out how to carry out the various tasks that we place before ourselves. It requires a willingness to make a constant critical assessment of what we are doing with the refusal to make excuses. It requires a willingness to recognize our current limits while, of course, perpetually seeking to expand our possibilities.

To a great extent, the term "anarchist" has been drained of meaning due to its increasing popularity as a self-description since the fall of the traditional left and particularly since the demonstrations in Seattle at the end of 1999. But this loss of meaning has also been advanced by anarchists who have been in the movement for years, who have chosen to embrace an evangelistic project, to place numbers and visibility in the spectacle above the concrete attempt to live out their revolt and to create their struggle as their own. This leads to an embrace of that capitalistic sort of pragmatism in which the ultimate aims have been lost in the striving for immediate effect—the methodology of the advertiser. To counter this, it is necessary to clarify once again what the anarchist project actually is. It is not an attempt to win followers to a particular belief system. It is not an attempt to make this society a little more bearable. Rather it is an attempt to create a world in which every individual is free to pursue the creation of his life on her own terms in free association with others of her choosing, and thus also to destroy every institution of domination and exploitation, every hierarchy including the invisible one's that grow out of evangelistic

and programmatic schemes. With this in mind, we can carry out our struggle by those means that reflect the world we desire and, thus, make our lives here and now fuller, more passionate and more joyful.

SOME NOTES ON MARXIST ANALYSIS:
For Discussion and Debate Toward the Development of a Deeper Anarchist Social Analysis

Often it seems that anarchists lack much in the way of economic theory, leading to conceptions of revolutionary change that seem to be largely schemes for a change in the form of social management rather than a total transformation of existence. Even anarcho-communist visions often seem more like economic schemes than poetic explorations of possibilities. What little serious economic theory is developed in anarchist circles seems to take the form of half-digested Marxism in which it is difficult to see any specifically anarchist aspects. I do not claim to have a deep knowledge of Marx. I have read The Communist Manifesto and the first volume of Capital as well as a few fragments here and there, but I have read a great deal by Marxists. There certainly may be many analytical tools that anarchists can steal from Marxism, but we need to do so critically. This article is intended to open up discussion in this area and deals with one particular problem I have with much Marxist analysis. There are others as well.

Marxist analysis is aimed at a revolutionary understanding of the social relationships of capitalism—as such, it is an attempt to understand the activities and relationships of people. Marx developed his theory and methodology to provide the

movement toward communism with a materialistic/scientific basis, in opposition to the quasi-mystical basis behind so many earlier communist ideas.

Unfortunately, the mechanistic basis of modern science, particularly in its 19th century manifestation, all too readily eradicates what is living from any situation under analysis in order to make it fit into the equations developed. Thus, in a great deal of Marxist theory, the fact that it is relationships between people that are being analyzed seems to be forgotten. Instead, the activities of productive forces, value, surplus labor, etc. end up being analyzed with the reality of human interaction disappearing beneath the economic concepts. But like gravity, evolution, entropy, inertia, etc., these concepts are not material realities, but mental constructs that can be useful tools for developing an understanding of relationships. In other words, they are not entities that can act for themselves.

Since "laws" of physics general refer to relationships between entities that, as far as we can tell, have no volition, these "laws" can be applied—to the extent to which they are useful—without taking individuality into account. But in dealing with social relationships—the activities and relationships between individuals with dreams, desires, passions and wills—the volitional aspect cannot be ignored without losing one of the most significant aspects of our situation, one of the most important tools for understanding social reality.

Taking the volitional aspect of social relationships into account removes some assumptions that often appear in Marxist analyses. First of all, one can no longer speak of situations that are objectively revolutionary or objectively non-revolutionary situations. Rather one can only speak in terms of situations in which uprisings are more likely to occur and those in which they are less likely to occur, situations in which uprisings are more likely to flower into revolutionary transformation and those in which they are less likely to

do so. But in recognizing the reality of the human will, the capacity to defy circumstances, not only individually, but also collectively, is always there. Thus, as well, one of the more disgusting conceptions of vulgar Marxism—the idea that capitalism, industrialism and the consequent immiseration of the vast majority of creatures on this planet are a necessary development in order to realize communism—is exposed for the determinist ideology that it is.

Once we recognize that all social relationships are the activities of individuals in association with each other, it becomes clear that the continuation of the present social order replies on the willingness of individuals to continue to act and relate in ways that reproduce it. Of course, in order to destroy this order, the choice to refuse the current existence must necessarily become collective, ultimately on a global scale. But from what would this collective refusal arise? The economic and productive forces have developed to the point that they are tearing the planet apart. In fact, any further development of these forces seems to guarantee the absolute destruction of the possibility of a free human existence. The old Marxist idea that development of the forces of production would bring about the objective necessity for communism no longer makes sense (even many Marxists now reject this progressivist perspective), unless one means by this, that the havoc wreaked by the industrial/cybernetic juggernaut will make it necessary to destroy the civilization of capital and the state in order for us avoid the parade of ever more devastating catastrophes and the destruction of life. But in this latter sense, it is not a determined inevitability, but a necessity to break out of the habits of acceptance and obedience that one is speaking about. Thus, it is a question of choice, of volition. As one comrade put it, it is not so much revolutionary consciousness, but revolutionary will that the exploited need to develop. The current social order continues not because conditions are not ripe for its destruction (they are, in fact, well

past rotting), but because refusal remains isolated and limited, because most people prefer the security of their misery to the unknown of insurrection and freedom.

An anarchist economic analysis would have to include, along with a serious analysis of the relationship of power and wealth, an analysis of the volitional in the continued reproduction of the economy. It is here that the role of desire, of aspirations, of utopian dreams in the development of an insurrectional practice can become an integral part of our analysis, where the poetry of revolt encounters the theory of revolution.

The Network of Domination

2001-2002

THE POWER OF THE STATE

It is not uncommon today, even in anarchist circles, to hear the state described as a mere servant of the multinationals, the IMF, the World Bank and other international economic institutions. According to this perspective, the state is not so much the holder and arbiter of power as merely a coordinator of the institutions of social control through which corporate economic rulers maintain their power. From this it is possible to draw conclusions that are quite detrimental to the development of an anarchist revolutionary project. If the state is merely a political structure for maintaining stability that is currently in the service of the great economic powers rather than a power in its own right with its own interests maintaining itself through domination and repression, then it could be reformed democratically made into an institutional opposition to the power of the multinationals. It would simply be a matter of "the People" becoming a counter-power and taking control of the state. Such an idea seems to lie behind the absurd notion of certain contemporary anti-capitalists that we should support the interests of nation-states against the international economic institutions. A clearer understanding of the state is necessary to counteract this trend.

The state could not exist if our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence as individuals in free association with each other had not been taken from us. This dispossession is the fundamental ***social*** alienation which provides the basis for all domination and exploitation. This alienation can rightly be traced to the rise of property (I say property as such and not just ***private*** property, because from very early on a great deal of property was ***institutional***—owned by the state). Property

can be defined as the exclusive claim by certain individuals and institutions over tools, spaces and materials necessary for existence, making them inaccessible to others. This claim is enforced through explicit or implicit violence. No longer free to grasp whatever is necessary for creating their lives, the dispossessed are forced to conform to conditions determined by the self-proclaimed owners of property in order to maintain their existence, which thus becomes an existence in servitude. The state is the institutionalization of this process which transforms the alienation of the capacity of individuals to determine the conditions of their own existence into the accumulation of power into the hands of a few.

It is futile and unnecessary to try to determine whether the accumulation of power or the accumulation of wealth had priority when property and the state first arose. Certainly now they are thoroughly integrated. It does seem likely that the state was the first *institution* to accumulate property in order to create a surplus under its control, a surplus that gave it real power over the social conditions under which its subjects had to exist. This surplus allowed it to develop the various institutions through which it enforced its power: military institutions, religious/ideological institutions, bureaucratic institutions, police institutions and so on. Thus, the state, from its origins, can be thought of as a capitalist in its own right, with its own specific economic interests that serve precisely to maintain its power over the conditions of social existence.

Like any capitalist, the state provides a specific service at a price. Or more accurately, the state provides two integrally related services: protection of property and social peace. It offers protection to private property through a system of laws that define and limit it and through the force of arms by which these laws are enforced. In fact, private property can only be said to truly exist when the institutions of the state are there to protect it from those who would simply

take what they want—without this institutional protection, there is merely the conflict of individual interests. This is why Stirner described private property as a form of social or state property to be held in contempt by unique ones. The state also provides protection for the "commons" from external raiders and from that which the state determines to be abuse by its subjects through law and armed force. As the sole protector of all property within its borders—a role maintained by the state's monopoly on violence—it establishes concrete control over all this property (relative, of course, to its real capacity for exercising that control). Thus the cost of this protection consists not only of taxes and various forms of compulsory service, but also of conformity to roles necessary to the social apparatus that maintains the state and acceptance of, at best, a relationship of vassalage to the state, which may claim any property or enclose any common space "in the common interest" at any time. The existence of property requires the state for protection and the existence of the state maintains property, but always ultimately as *state* property regardless of how "private" it supposedly is.

The implied violence of law and the explicit violence of the military and the police through which the state protects property are the same means by which it maintains social peace. The violence by which people are dispossessed of their capacity to create life on their own terms is nothing less than ***social war*** which manifests daily in the usually gradual (but sometimes as quick as a police bullet) slaughter of those who are exploited, excluded and marginalized by the social order. When people under attack begin to recognize their enemy, they frequently act to counter-attack. The state's task of maintaining ***social peace*** is thus an act of ***social war*** on the part of the rulers against the ruled—the suppression and prevention of any such counter-attack. The violence of those who rule against those they rule is inherent in social peace. But a social peace based solely on

brute force is always precarious. It is necessary for the state to implant the idea in people's heads that they have a stake in the continued existence of the state and of the social order it maintains. This may take place as in ancient Egypt where religious propaganda maintaining the divinity of the Pharaoh justified the extortion by which he took possession of all the surplus grain making the populace absolutely dependent on his good will in times of famine. Or it may take the form of institutions for democratic participation which create a more subtle form of blackmail in which we are obliged to participate if we want to complain, but in which we are equally obliged to accept "the will of the people" if we do participate. But, behind these forms of blackmail, whether subtle or blatant, the arms, the prisons, the soldiers and the cops are always there, and this is the essence of the state and of social peace. The rest is just veneer.

Though the state can be looked upon as capitalist (in the sense that it accumulated power by accumulating surplus wealth in a dialectic process), capitalism as we know it with its "private" economic institutions is a relatively recent development traceable to the beginning of the modern era. This development has certainly produced significant changes in the dynamics of power since a significant portion of the ruling class are now not ***directly*** part of the state apparatus except as citizens, like all those they exploit. But these changes do not mean that the state has been subjugated to the various global economic institutions or that it has become peripheral to the functioning of power.

If the state is itself a capitalist, with its own economic interests to pursue and maintain, then the reason that it works to maintain capitalism is not that it has been subordinated to other capitalist institutions, but because in order to maintain its power it must maintain its economic strength as a capitalist among capitalists. Specific weaker states end up being

subjugated to global economic interests for the same reason that smaller firms are, because they do not have the strength to maintain their own interests. The great states play at least as significant a role in determining global economic policies as the great corporations. It is, in fact, the arms of the state that will enforce these policies.

The power of the state resides in its legal and institutional monopoly on violence. This gives the state a very concrete material power upon which the global economic institutions are dependent. Institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF do not only include delegates from all the major state powers in all decision-making processes; they also depend upon the military force of the most powerful states to impose their policies, the threat of physical violence that must always stand behind economic extortion if it is to function. With the real power of violence in their hands, the great states are hardly going to function as mere servants to the global economic institutions. Rather in proper capitalist form, their relationship is one of mutual extortion accepted for the benefit of the entire ruling class.

In addition to its monopoly on violence, the state also controls many of the networks and institutions necessary to commerce and production. Highway systems, railway systems, ports, airports, satellite and fiber optic systems necessary to communications and information networks are generally state-run and always subject to state control. Scientific and technological research necessary to new developments in production is largely dependent on the facilities of state-run universities and the military.

Thus corporate power depends upon state power to maintain itself. It is not a matter of the subjugation of one sort of power to another, but the development of an integral system of power that manifests itself as the two-headed hydra of capital and the state, a system that functions as a whole to maintain

domination and exploitation, the conditions imposed by the ruling class for the maintenance of our existence. Within this context, institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank are best understood as means by which the various state and corporate powers coordinate their activities in order to maintain unity of domination over the exploited classes in the midst of the competition of economic and political interests. Thus the state does not serve these institutions, but rather these institutions serve the interests of the most powerful states and capitalists.

It is, thus, not possible for those of us who seek the destruction of the social order to play the nation-state against the capitalists and gain anything by it. Their greatest interest is the same, to maintain the current order of things. For our part it is necessary to attack the state and capitalism with all of our might, recognizing them as the two-headed hydra of domination and exploitation that we must destroy if we are ever to take back our capacity to create the conditions of our existence.

THE COST OF SURVIVAL

Everything has a price, the measurement of its value as a quantity determined in terms of a general equivalent. Nothing has value ***in itself***. All value is determined in relationship to the market—and this includes the value of our lives, of our selves. Our lives have been divided into units of measured time that we are compelled to sell in order to buy back our survival in the form of bits of the stolen lives of others that production has transformed into commodities for sale. This is economic reality.

This horrendous alienation has its basis in the intertwining of three of the most fundamental institutions of this society:

property, commodity exchange and work. The integral relationship between these three creates the system through which the ruling class extracts the wealth that is necessary for maintaining their power. I am speaking here of the economy.

The social order of domination and exploitation has its origins in a fundamental social alienation, the origins of which are a matter for intriguing speculation, but the nature of which is quite clear. The vast multitudes of people have been robbed of their capacity to determine the conditions of their own existence, to create the lives and relationships they desire, so that the few at the top can accumulate power and wealth and turn the totality of social existence to their own benefit. In order for this to occur, people have to be robbed of the means by which they were able to fulfill their needs and their desires, their dreams and aspirations. This could only occur with the enclosing of certain areas and the hoarding of certain things so that they are no longer accessible to everyone. But such enclosures and hoards would be meaningless unless some one had the means to prevent them from being raided—a force to keep others from taking what they want without asking permission. Thus with such accumulation it becomes necessary to create an apparatus to protect it. Once established this system leaves the majority in a position of dependence on the few who have carried out this appropriation of wealth and power. To access any of the accumulated wealth the multitudes are forced to exchange a major portion of the goods they produce. Thus, part of the activity they originally carried out for themselves must now be carried out for their rulers, simply in order to guarantee their survival. As the power of the few increases, they come to control more and more of the resources and the products of labor until finally the activity of the exploited is nothing but labor to create commodities in exchange for a wage which they then spend to buy back that commodity. Of course, the full development of this process

is slow in part because it is met with resistance at every turn. There are still parts of the earth and parts of life that have not been enclosed by the state and the economy, but most of our existence has been stamped with a price tag, and its cost has been increasing geometrically for ten thousand years.

So the state and the economy arose together as aspects of the alienation described above. They constitute a two-headed monster imposing an impoverished existence upon us, in which our lives are transformed into a struggle for survival. This is as true in the affluent countries as in those which have been impoverished by capitalist expropriation. What defines life as mere survival is neither the dearth of goods available at a price nor the lack of the means to buy those goods. Rather when one is forced to sell ones life away, to give one's energy to a project that is not of one's choosing, but that serves to benefit another who tells one what to do, for a meager compensation that allows one to buy a few necessities and pleasures—this is merely surviving, no matter how many ***things*** one may be able to buy. Life is not an accumulation of things, it is a qualitative relationship to the world.

This coerced selling of one's life, this wage-***slavery***, reduces life to a commodity, an existence divided into measured pieces which are sold for so much a piece. Of course to the worker, who has been blackmailed into selling her life in this way the wage will never seem to be enough. How could it be when what has really been lost is not so much the allotted units of time as the quality of life itself? In a world where lives are bought and sold in exchange for survival, where the beings and things that make up the natural world are simply goods for sale to be exploited in the production of other goods for sale, the value of things and the value of life becomes a number, a measurement, and that measurement is always in dollars or pesos or euros or yen—that is to say in money. But no amount of money and no amount of the goods money buys can compensate for the emptiness of

such an existence for the fact that this sort of valuation can only exist by draining the quality, the energy, the wonder from life.

The struggle against the rule of the economy—which must go hand in hand with the struggle against the state—must begin with a refusal of this quantification of existence that can only occur when are lives are stolen away from us. It is the struggle to destroy the institutions of property, commodity exchange and work—not in order to make people dependent on new institutions in which the rule of survival takes a more charitable face, but so that we may all reappropriate our lives as our own and pursue our needs, desires, dreams and aspirations in all their immeasurable singularity.

FROM PROLETARIAN TO INDIVIDUAL:
Toward an Anarchist Understanding of Class

The social relationships of class and exploitation are not simple. Workerist conceptions, which are based on the idea of an objectively revolutionary class that is defined in terms of its relationship to the means of production, ignore the mass of those world-wide whose lives are stolen from them by the current social order but who can find no place within its productive apparatus. Thus these conceptions end up presenting a narrow and simplistic understanding of exploitation and revolutionary transformation. In order to carry out a revolutionary struggle against exploitation, we need to develop an understanding of class as it actually exists in the world without seeking any guarantees.

At its most basic, class society is one in which there are those who rule and those who are ruled, those who exploit and those who are exploited. Such a social order can only arise when people lose their capacity to determine the conditions of

their own existence. Thus, the essential quality shared by the exploited is their dispossession, their loss of the capacity to make and carry out the basic decisions about how they live.

The ruling class is defined in terms of its own project of accumulating power and wealth. While there are certainly significant conflicts within the ruling class in terms of specific interests and real competition for control of resources and territory, this overarching project aimed at the control of social wealth and power, and thus of the lives and relationships of every living being, provides this class with a unified positive project.

The exploited class has no such positive project to define it. Rather it is defined in terms of what is done to it, what is taken away from it. Being uprooted from the ways of life that they had known and created with their peers, the only community that is left to the people who make up this heterogeneous class is that provided by capital and the state—the community of work and commodity exchange decorated with whatever nationalist, religious, ethnic, racial or subcultural ideological constructions through which the ruling order creates identities into which to channel individuality and revolt. The concept of a positive proletarian identity, of a single, unified, positive proletarian project, has no basis in reality since what defines one as proletarian is precisely that her life has been stolen from her, that he has been transformed into a pawn in the projects of the rulers.

The workerist conception of the proletarian project has its origins in the revolutionary theories of Europe and the United States (particularly certain marxist and syndicalist theories). By the late 19th century, both western Europe and the eastern United States were well on their way to being thoroughly industrialized, and the dominant ideology of progress equated technological development with social liberation. This ideology manifested in revolutionary theory as the idea that the

industrial working class was objectively revolutionary because it was in the position to take over the means of production developed under capitalism (which, as products of progress, were assumed to be inherently liberating) and turn them to the service of the human community. By ignoring most of the world (along with a significant portion of the exploited in the industrialized areas), revolutionary theorists were thus able to invent a positive project for the proletariat, an objective historical mission. That it was founded on the bourgeois ideology of progress was ignored. In my opinion, the luddites had a much clearer perspective, recognizing that industrialism was another one of the masters' tools for dispossessing them. With good reason, they attacked the machines of mass production.

The process of dispossession has long since been accomplished in the West (though of course it is a process that is going on at all times even here), but in much of the South of the world it is still in its early stages. Since the process started in the West though, there have been some significant changes in the functioning of the productive apparatus. Skilled factory positions have largely disappeared, and what is needed in a worker is flexibility, the capacity to adapt—in other words, the capacity to be an interchangeable cog in the machine of capital. In addition, factories tend to require far fewer workers to carry on the productive process, both because of developments in technology and management techniques that have allowed a more decentralized productive process and because increasingly the type of work necessary in factories is largely just monitoring and maintaining machines.

On a practical level this means that we are all, as individuals, expendable to the production process, because we are all replaceable—that lovely capitalist egalitarianism in which we are all equal to zero. In the first world, this has had the effect of pushing increasing numbers of the exploited into increasingly

precarious positions: day labor, temporary work, service sector jobs, chronic unemployment, the black market and other forms of illegality, homelessness and prison. The steady job with its guarantee of a somewhat stable life—even if one's life is not one's own—is giving way to a lack of guarantees where the illusions provided by a moderately comfortable consumerism can no longer hide that life under capitalism is always lived on the edge of catastrophe.

In the third world, people who have been able to create their own existence, if sometimes a difficult one, are finding their land and their other means for doing so being pulled out from under them as the machines of capital quite literal invade their homes and eat away any possibility to continue living directly off their own activity. Torn from their lives and lands, they are forced to move to the cities where there is little employment for them. Shantytowns develop around the cities, often with populations higher than the city proper. Without any possibility of steady employment, the inhabitants of these shantytowns are compelled to form a black market economy to survive, but this also still serves the interests of capital. Others, in desperation, choose immigration, risking imprisonment in refugee camps and centers for undocumented foreigners in the hope of improving their condition.

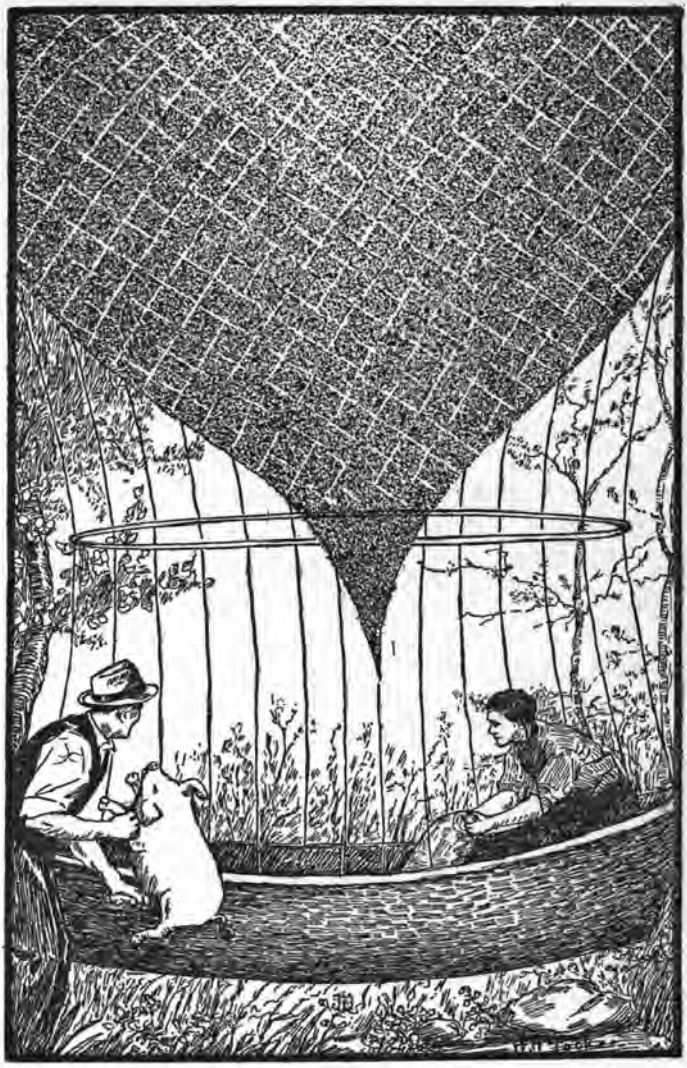
So, along with dispossession, precariousness and expendability are increasingly the shared traits of those who make up the exploited class worldwide. If, on the one hand, this means that this commodity civilization is creating in its midst a class of barbarians who truly have nothing to lose in bringing it down (and not in the ways imagined by the old workerist ideologues), on the other hand, these traits do not in themselves provide any basis for a positive project of the transformation of life. The rage provoked by the miserable conditions of life that this society imposes can easily be channeled into projects that serve the ruling order or at least the specific interest of

one or another of the rulers. The examples of situations in the past few decades in which the rage of the exploited has been harnessed to fuel nationalist, racialist or religious projects that serve only to reinforce domination are too many to count. The possibility of the end of the current social order is as great as it ever was, but the faith in its inevitability can no longer pretend to have an objective basis.

But in order to truly understand the revolutionary project and begin the project of figuring out how to carry it out (and to developing an analysis of how the ruling class manages to deflect the rage of those it exploits into its own projects), it is necessary to realize that exploitation does not merely occur in terms of the production of wealth, but also in terms of the reproduction of social relationships. Regardless of the position of any particular proletarian in the productive apparatus, it is in the interests of the ruling class that everyone would have a role, a social identity, that serves in the reproduction of social relationships. Race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, subculture—all of these things may, indeed, reflect very real and significant differences, but all are social constructions for channeling these differences into roles useful for the maintenance of the current social order. In the most advanced areas of the current society where the market defines most relationships, identities largely come to be defined in terms of the commodities that symbolize them, and interchangeability becomes the order of the day in social reproduction, just as it is in economic production. And it is precisely because identity is a social construction and increasingly a saleable commodity that it must be dealt with seriously by revolutionaries, analyzed carefully in its complexity with the precise aim of moving beyond these categories to the point that our differences (including those that this society would define in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, etc.) are the reflection of each of us as singular individuals.

Because there is no common positive project to be found in our condition as proletarians—as the exploited and dispossessed—our project must be the struggle to destroy our proletarian condition, to put an end to our dispossession. The essence of what we have lost is not control over the means of production or of material wealth; it is our lives themselves, our capacity to create our existence in terms of our own needs and desires. Thus, our struggle finds its terrain everywhere, at all times. Our aim is to destroy everything that keeps our lives from us: capital, the state, the industrial and post-industrial technological apparatus, work, sacrifice, ideology, every organization that tries to usurp our struggle, in short, all systems of control.

In the very process of carrying out this struggle in the only way that we can carry it out—outside of and against all formality and institutionalization—we begin to develop new ways of relating based on self-organization, a commonality based on the unique differences that define each of us as individuals whose freedom expands with the freedom of the other. It is here in revolt against our proletarian condition that we find that shared positive project that is different for each one of us: the collective struggle for individual realization.



WORK:
The Theft of Life

"What is the bombing of a judge,
the kidnapping of an industrialist,
the hanging of a politician, the shooting of a cop,
the looting of a supermarket,
the burning of a commissioner's office,
the stoning of a journalist,
the heckling of an intellectual, the thrashing of an artist,
in the face of the deadly alienation of our existence,
the much too early sound of the alarm clock,
the traffic jam on the expressway,
the goods for sale lined up on the shelves?"

The alarm clock disrupts your sleep again—as always, much too early. You drag yourself from the warmth of your bed to the bathroom for a shower, a shave and a shit, then run down to the kitchen where you wash down a pastry or, if you have the time, some toast and eggs with a cup of coffee. Then you rush out the door to battle traffic jams or crowds in the subway until you arrive… at work, where your day is spent in tasks not of your choosing, in compulsory association with others involved in related tasks, the primary aim of which is the continued reproduction of the social relationships that constrain you to survive in this manner.

But this is not all. In compensation, you receive a wage, a sum of money that (after paying rent and bills) you must take out to shopping centers to buy food, clothes, various necessities and entertainment. Though this is considered your "free time" as opposed to "work time", it too is compulsory

activity that only secondarily guarantees your survival, its primary purpose again being to reproduce the current social order. And for most people, moments free of these constraints are fewer and fewer.

According to the ruling ideology of this society, this existence is the result of a social contract between equals—equals before the law that is. The worker, it is said, contracts to sell her labor to the boss for a mutually agreed upon wage. But can a contract be considered free and equal when one side holds all the power?

If we look at this contract more closely, it becomes clear that it is no contract at all, but the most extreme and violent extortion. This is currently exposed most blatantly at the margins of capitalist society where people who have lived for centuries (or, in some cases, millennia) on their own terms find their capacity to determine the conditions of their existence ripped away by the bulldozers, chainsaws, mining equipment and so on of the world's rulers. But it is a process that has been going on for centuries, a process involving blatant, large-scale theft of land and life sanctioned and carried out by the ruling class. Bereft of the means for determining the conditions of their own existence, the exploited cannot be said, in honesty, to be contracting freely and equally with their exploiters. It is clearly a case of blackmail.

And what are the terms of this blackmail? The exploited are forced to sell the time of their life to their exploiters in exchange for survival. And this is the real tragedy of work. The social order of work is based on the imposed opposition between life and survival. The question of how one will get by suppresses that of how one wants to live, and in time this all seems natural and one narrows one's dreams and desires to the things that money can buy.

However, the conditions of the world of work do not just apply to those with jobs. One can easily see how the unemployed

searching for a job from fear of homelessness and hunger is caught up in the world of work. But the same holds for the recipient of state aid whose survival depends on the existence of the assistance bureaucracy… and even for those for whom the avoidance of getting a job has become such a priority that one's decisions come to center around scams, shoplifting, dumpster diving—all the various ways to ***get by*** without a job. In other words, activities that could be fine means for supporting a life project become ends in themselves, making mere survival one's life project. How, really, does his differ from a job?

But what is the real basis of the power behind this extortion that is the world of work? Of course, there are laws and courts, police and military forces, fines and prisons, the fear of hunger and homelessness—all very real and significant aspects of domination. But even the state's force of arms can only succeed in carrying out its task because people submit. And here is the real basis of all domination—the submission of the slaves, their decision to accept the security of known misery and servitude rather than risk the unknown of freedom, their willingness to accept a guaranteed but colorless survival in exchange for the possibility of truly living that offers no guarantees.

So in order to put an end to one's slavery, to move beyond the limits of merely getting by, it is necessary to make a decision to refuse to submit; it is necessary to begin to reappropriate one's life here and now. Such a project inevitably places one in conflict with the entire social order of work; so the project of reappropriating one's existence must also be the project of destroying work. To clarify, when I say "work", I do not mean the activity by which one creates the means of one's existence (which ideally would never be separate from simply living) but rather a social relationship that transforms this activity into a sphere separate from one's life and places it in the service of the ruling order so that the activity, in fact, ceases to have any

direct relationship to the creation of one's existence, but rather only maintains it in the realm of mere survival (at whatever level of consumption) through a series of mediations of which property, money and commodity exchange are among the most significant. This is the world we must destroy in the process of taking back our lives, and the necessity of this destruction makes the project of the reappropriation of our lives one with the projects of insurrection and social revolution.

THE MACHINERY OF CONTROL:
A Critical Look at Technology

"Criticizing technology […] means considering its general framework, seeing it not simply is an assemblage of machinery, but as a social relationship, a system; it means understanding that a technological instrument reflects the society that produces it, and that its introduction changes relations between individuals. Criticizing technology means refusing to subordinate human activity to profit."

—from ***At Daggers Drawn***

Technology does not develop in a vacuum, independently of the social relationships of the order in which it develops. It is the product of a context, and so inevitably reflects that context. Thus, the claim that technology is neutral has no basis. It could not possibly be any more neutral that the other systems developed to guarantee the reproduction of the current social order—government, commodity exchange, marriage and the family, private property, … Thus a serious revolutionary analysis necessarily needs to include a critical assessment of technology.

By technology, I do not mean simply tools, machines or even "an assemblage of machinery" as individual entities, but rather and integrated system of techniques, machinery, people and materials designed to reproduce the social relationships that prolong and advance its existence. In order to be clear from the start, I am not saying that technology ***produces*** social relationships, but rather that it is designed to ***reproduce*** them in accordance with the needs of the ruling system.

Before capitalism came to dominate social relationships, tools, techniques and even a number of machines had been created and applied to specific tasks. There were even some systematic applications of techniques and machinery that could be considered technological in the fullest sense of the word. It is interesting to note that these latter were applied most fully precisely where power required strict order—in monasteries, in the torture chambers of the inquisition, in galleys, in the creation of monuments to power, in the bureaucratic, military and police structures of powerful empires like dynastic China. But they remained largely peripheral to the daily life of the vast majority of people who tended to use tools and techniques that they created themselves as individuals or within their small community.

With the rise of capitalism, the necessity for the large-scale extraction and development of resources led to the bloody and ruthless expropriation of all that had been shared communally by the newly developing capitalist ruling class (a process that was extended internationally through the building of colonial empires) and the development of an increasingly integrated technological system that allowed the maximum efficiency in the use of resources including labor power. The aims of this system were increased efficiency in the extraction and development of resources and increased control over the exploited.

The earliest applications of industrial techniques occurred on board mercantile and naval ships and on the plantation. The latter was in fact a new system of large-scale farming for profit that could develop at the time due to the dispossession of peasants in Europe—especially Britain—providing a quantity of indentured servants and criminals sentenced to hard labor and the development of the African slave-trade that tore people from their homes and forced them into servitude. The former was also largely based on the dispossession of the exploited classes—many of whom found themselves kidnapped and forced into labor on the ships. The industrial system imposed in these contexts did not so much have a basis in an assemblage of manufactured machines as in the method of work coordination in which the workers were the gears of the machine and if one failed to do his part it would put the entire structure of work at risk.

But there were specific aspects of this system that threatened it. The plantation system, by bringing together various dispossessed groups with differing knowledge and experiences, allowed interactions that could provide a basis for illegal association and shared revolt. Sailors who lived in slave-like conditions on the ships also provided a means of communication between different places creating a kind of internationalism of the dispossessed. The records of illegal associations and insurrections around the north Atlantic seaboard in the 1600's an 1700's involving all races of the dispossessed with little evidence of racism are inspiring, but it also forced capitalism to develop its techniques further. A combination of racial ideology and a division of labor was used to form rifts between black slaves and the indentured servants of European ancestry. In addition, though capital would never be able to do without the transportation of goods and resources, for economic as well as social reasons it began to shift emphasis to the manufacturing of resources into goods for sale on a large scale.

The reliance on small-scale artisans to manufacture goods was dangerous to capital in several ways. Economically, it was slow and inefficient and did not place enough of the profit into the hands of the ruling class. But more significantly the relative independence of the artisans made them difficult to control. They determined their own hours, their own work speed and so on. Thus, the factory system that had already proven fairly efficient on ships and plantations was applied as well to the manufacturing of goods.

So the industrial system was not simply (or even primarily) developed because it was a more efficient way for manufacturing goods. Capitalists are not particularly interested in the manufacturing of goods as such. Rather they manufacture goods simply as a necessary part of the process of expanding capital, creating profit and maintaining their control over wealth and power. Thus, the factory system—this integration of techniques, machines, tools, people and resources that is technology as we know it—was developed as a means for controlling the most volatile part of the production process—the human worker. The factory is in fact set up like a huge machine with each part—including the human parts—integrally interconnected with each other part. Although the perfecting of this process took place over time as class struggle showed the weaknesses in the system, this central aim was inherent in industrial technology from the beginning, because it was the reason behind it. The Luddites recognized as much and this was the source of their struggle.

If we recognize that the technology developed under capitalism was developed precisely to maintain and increase the control of the capitalist ruling class over our lives, there is nothing surprising about the fact that those technical advances that weren't specific responses to class struggle at the work place have occurred most often in the area of military and policing techniques. Cybernetics and electronics provide

means of gathering and storing information on levels never known before, allowing for far greater surveillance over an increasingly impoverished and potentially rebellious world population. They also allow the decentralization of power without any loss of control to the rulers—the control resides precisely in the technological systems developed. Of course, this stretching of the web of control over the entire social sphere also means that it is very fragile. Weak links are everywhere, and creative rebels find them. But the necessity for control that is as total as possible moves the rulers of this order to accept these risks, hoping that they will be able to fix the weak links quickly enough.

So technology as we know it, this industrial system of integrated techniques, machinery, people and resources, is not neutral. It is a specific tool, created in the interests of the ruling class, that was never intended to serve to meet our needs and desires, but rather to maintain and extend the control of the ruling order. Most anarchists recognize that the state, private property, the commodity system, the patriarchal family and organized religion are inherently dominating institutions and systems that need to be destroyed if we are to create a world in which we are all free to determine our lives as we see fit. Thus, it is strange that the same understanding is not applied to the industrial technological system. Even in this age when factories provide no space for any sort of individual initiative, when communications are dominated by huge systems and networks accessible to every police agency and which determine how one can use them, when the technological system as a whole requires humans as little more than hands and eyes, maintenance workers and quality control inspectors, there are still anarchists who call for "taking over the means of production". But the technological system that we know is itself part of the structures of domination. It was created to more efficiently control those exploited by capital. Like

the state, like capital itself, this technological system will need to be destroyed in order for us to take back our lives. What this means with regards to specific tools and techniques will be determined in the course of our struggle against the world of domination. But precisely in order to open the way to possibilities for creating what we desire in freedom, the machinery of control will have to be destroyed.

PROPERTY:
The Enclosing Fences of Capital

Among the many great lies that maintains the rule of capital is the idea that property is freedom. The rising bourgeoisie made this claim as they partitioned the earth with fences of all sorts—physical fences, legal fences, moral fences, social fences, military fences… whatever they found necessary to enclose the murdered wealth of the earth and to exclude the multitudes who were undesirable except as labor power.

Like so many lies of power, this one manages to deceive through sleight-of-hand. The multitudes "unchained" from their land were free to choose between starving or selling the time of their lives to whatever master would buy them. "Free laborers" their masters called them, since unlike chattel slaves, the masters had no need to take responsibility for their lives. It was merely their labor power that the masters bought. Their lives were their own, they were told, though in fact these had been stolen away when the capitalist masters enclosed the land and drove these "free laborers" off to search for survival. This process of expropriation, which allowed capitalism to develop, continues at its margins today, but another sleight-of-hand maintains the bourgeois illusion at the center.

Property, we are told, is a thing and we purchase it with money. Thus, according to the lie, freedom resides in the things that we

can buy and increases with their accumulation. In pursuit of this freedom that is never quite attained, people chain themselves to activities not of their choosing, giving up every vestige of real choice, in order to earn the money that is supposed to buy them freedom. And as their lives are consumed in the service of projects that have never been their own, they spend their wages on toys and entertainment, on therapy and drugs, these anesthetics that guarantee they won't see through the lie.

Property, in fact, is not the thing that is owned. It is the fences—the fences that keep us in, the fences that keep us out, all the enclosures through which our lives are stolen from us. Thus, property is, above all, a restriction, a limit of such magnitude that it guarantees that no individual will be able to realize herself completely for as long as it exists.

To fully understand this, we must look at property as a social relationship between things and people mediated by the state and the market. The institution of property could not exist without the state that concentrates power into institutions of domination. Without the laws, the arms, the cops and the courts, property would have no real basis, no force to support it.

In fact, it could be said that the state is itself the instituting of property. What is the state if not a network of institutions through which control over a particular territory and its resources is asserted and maintained by force of arms? All property is ultimately state property since it exists only by permission and under the protection of the state. Dependent on the levels of real power, this permission and protection can be revoked at any time for any reason, and the property will revert back to the state. This is not to say the state is more powerful than capital, but rather that the two are so thoroughly entwined as to constitute a single social order of domination and exploitation. And property is the institution through which this order asserts its power in our daily lives, compelling us to work and pay in order to reproduce it.

So property is actually the razor wire, the "No Trespassing" sign, the price tag, the cop and the security camera. The message that these all carry is the same: one cannot use or enjoy anything without permission, and permission must be granted by the state and paid for in money somewhere along the line.

It comes as no surprise then that the world of property, ruled by the market and the state, is an impoverished world where lack, not satisfaction, permeates existence. The pursuit of individual realization, blocked at every turn by yet another fence, is replaced by the homogenizing, atomizing competition to accumulate more things, because in this world the "individual" is measured only in terms of the things that he owns. And the inhuman community of the price tag strives to bury singularity beneath identities found in shop windows.

Attacking the things owned by the rulers of this world —smashing bank windows, burning police cars, blowing up the employment office or breaking machinery—certainly has its worth. If nothing else, one may get a bit of pleasure, and some actions of this sort may even hinder specific projects of the ruling order. But ultimately we must attack the ***institution*** of property, every physical, legal, moral or social fence. This attack begins from the desire we each have to take back our life and determine it on our own terms. Every moment and every space we steal back from this society of production and consumption provides us with a weapon for expanding this struggle. But, as one comrade wrote: "…this struggle is widespread or it is nothing. Only when looting becomes a large-scale practice, when the gift arms itself against exchange value, when relationships are no longer mediated by commodities and individuals give their own value to things, only then does the destruction of the market and of money – that s all one with the demolition of the state and every hierarchy – become a real possibility", and with it

the destruction of property. The individual revolt against the world of property must expand into a social revolution that will break down every fence and open every possibility for individual realization.

RELIGION:
When the Sacred Imprisons the Marvelous

It is likely that human beings have always had encounters with the world around them and flights of their own imaginations that have evoked an expansive sense of wonder, an experience of the marvelous. Making love to the ocean, devouring the icy, spearmint moon, leaping toward the stars in a mad, delightful dance – such are the wicked imaginings that make the mechanistic conceptions of the world appear so dreary. But sadly in this age the blight of industrialism with its shallow mechanistic logic that springs from the bookkeepers' worldview of capital has damaged many minds, draining reason of passion and passion of the capacity to create its own reasons and find its own meanings in the experience and creation of the marvelous. So many turn to the sacred in search of the sense of joy and wonder, forgetting that the sacred itself is the prison of the marvelous.

The history of religion is really the history of property and of the state. These institutions are all founded on expropriations that together make up social alienation, the alienation of individuals from their capacity for creating their lives on their own terms. Property expropriates access to the material abundance of the world from individuals, placing it into the hands of a few who fence it in and place a price upon it. The state expropriates capacity of individuals to create their lives and relationships on their own terms, placing it into the hands of a few in the form of power to control the lives of others,

transforming their activity into the labor power necessary to reproduce the social order. In the same way, religion (and its current parallels, ideology and psychiatry) is the institution that expropriates the capacity of individuals to interpret their interactions with the worlds around and within them, placing into the hands of a few specialists who create interpretations that serve the interests of power. The processes through which these expropriations are carried out are not really separated, but are rather thoroughly interconnected, forming an integrated network of domination, but I think, in this age when many anarchists seem to take interest in the sacred, it is useful to examine religion as a specific institution of domination.

If currently, at least in the Western-style democracies, the connection between religion and the state seems relatively tenuous, residing in the dogmatic outbursts of an Ashcroft or the occasional blessing from the pope, originally the state and religion were two faces of a single entity. When the rulers were not gods or high priests themselves, they were still ordained by a god through the high priest, specially consecrated to represent god on earth as ruling in his or her name. Thus, the laws of the rulers were the laws of god; their words were god's words. It is true that eventually religions developed that distinguished the laws of god from those of the state. Generally these religions developed among people undergoing persecution and, thus, feeling the need to appeal to a higher power than that of the state. Thus, these religions supported the concept of rulership, of a law that ruled over individuals as well as over earthly states. So if the ancient Hebrews could distinguish "godly" from "ungodly" rulers, and if the early Christians could say, "We should obey god rather than men", such statements were not calls for rebellion, but for obedience to a higher authority. The Christian bible makes this explicit when it says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and "Submit yourselves to the powers that be, for they are ordained of god." If selective

readings of parts of the Judeo-Christian scriptures could inspire revolt, it is unlikely to be the revolt of individuals against all that steals their lives away. Rather it would be a revolt against a particular state with the aim of replacing it with a state based on the "laws of god."

But religion is far more than just the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is therefore necessary to examine the concept of the sacred itself, the idea that seems to be at the heart of religion. Frequently, these days I hear people lamenting the loss of the sacred. I can't help but laugh. In this world where borders, boundaries, fences, razor-wire, laws and restrictions of all kinds abound, what is there that is ***not*** sacred; what is there that we can touch, interact with and enjoy freely? But, of course, I misunderstand. People are actually lamenting the loss of wonder, of joy, of that expansive feeling of consuming and being consumed by a vibrant living universe. But if this is what they are lamenting, then why speak of the loss of the sacred, when the concept of the sacred is itself the thing that separated wonder and joy from the world and placed in a separate realm?

The sacred has never actually meant that which is wonderful, awe-inspiring or joyful. It has meant that which is ***consecrated***. Consecration is precisely the process of separating something from normal life, from free and equal availability to everyone to use as they see fit, in order to set it aside for a specialized task. This process begins with the rise of specialists in interpreting the meaning of reality. These specialists are themselves consecrated, separated from the tasks of normal life and fed by the sacrifices and offerings of those for whom they interpret reality. Of course, the concept that there can be those with a special connection to the meaning of reality implies that there is only one meaning that is universal and that thus requires special attention and capacities to be understood. So, first as shamans and later as priests, these sacred persons expropriate the individual's capacity to create their own meaning. One's poetic encounters with the

world become insignificant, and the places, things and beings that are special to an individual are reduced to mere whims with no social significance. They are replaced by the sacred places, things and institutions determined by the priest, which are then kept away from profane laymen and women, presented only through the proper mediation of ritual to guarantee that the minds of the flock remain clouded so that don't see the actual banality of the sacred.

It is precisely the nature of the sacred as *separation* that gives birth to the gods. On close examination, what is a god if not the symbol of the misplaced human capacity to will, to act for oneself, to create life and meaning on one's own terms? And religion, in creating gods, in fact serves the ruling class in a most essential way. It blinds the exploited to the real reason why they are separated from their capacity to determine their own existence. It is not a question of expropriation and social alienation, but of a separation that is inherent in the nature of things. All power resides in the gods, and we can only accept their will, striving to please them as best we can. Anything else is hubris. Thus, the actual expropriation of people's capacities to create their own lives disappears behind a divinely determined fate that cannot be fought. And since the state represents the will of god on earth, it too cannot be fought, but must merely be endured. The only link that can be made with this sacred power is that offered by the mediation of religious ritual, a "link" that, in fact, guarantees the continuation of the separation on any practical level. The end of this separation would be the end of the sacred and of religion.

Once we recognize that it is consecration—that is to say, separation—that defines the sacred, it becomes clear why authority, property and all of the institutions of domination are ***sacred***. They are all the social form of separation, the consecration of capacities and wealth that were once accessible to all of us to a specialized use so that now we cannot access except through

the proper rituals which maintain the separation. So there it is completely accurate in the literal sense to speak of property as sacred and of commodities as fetishes. Capitalism is profoundly religious.

The history of Western religion has not been one of simple acceptance of the sacred and of god (I don't have enough knowledge to speak of non-Western religions in this regard). Through out the Middle Ages and beyond there were heretical movements that went so far as to question the very existence of god and of the sacred. Expressed in the language of their time, these movements—the Free Spirits, the Adamites, the Ranters and many others—denied the separation that defined sacredness, claimed divinity as their own and thus reappropriated their will and capacity to act on their own terms, to create their own lives. This, of course placed them at odds with the society around them, the society of the state, economy and religion.

As capitalism began to arise in the Western world and to spread itself through colonial imperialism, a movement of revolt against this process also arose. Far from being a movement for a return to an imagined idyllic past, it carried within itself the seeds of anarchy and true communism. This revolutionary seed was most likely sparked by the interactions of people from several different cultural backgrounds who were being dispossessed in different ways—the poor of Europe whose lands were "enclosed" (shall we say consecrated, which seems strangely synonymous with stolen?), forcing them onto the roads and the seas, African stolen from their homelands, separated from their families and cultures and forced into slavery and indigenous people already in the lands being colonized, finding themselves dispossessed and often slaughtered. Uprisings along the Atlantic seaboard (in Europe, Africa and America) were not infrequent in the 1600's and early 1700's, and usually involved egalitarian cooperation between the all of these groups of the dispossessed and exploited.

But to my mind, one of the main weaknesses of this movement of revolt is that it never seemed to completely free itself from the religious perception of the world. While the capitalist class expropriated more and more aspects of the world and of life from the hands of individuals, setting them aside for its in uses and making them accessible only through the appropriate mediation of the rituals of wage labor and commodity exchange, the rebels, for the most part, could not make the final step of rebelling absolutely against the sacred. So they merely opposed one conception of the sacred against another, one morality against another, thus leaving in place social alienation. This is what made it possible to recuperate this revolt for democracy and humanitarian capitalism or socialism, in which "the people", "society" or "the human race" play the role of god.

Religion, property, the state and all the other institutions of dominations are based on the fundamental separations that cause social alienation. As such, they constitute the sacred. If we are to again be able to grasp the marvelous as our own, to experience wonder and joy directly on our own terms, to make love with oceans or dance with stars with no gods or priests intervening to tell us what it must mean, or, to put it more simply, if we are to grasp our lives as our own, creating them as we will, then we must attack the sacred in all its forms. We must desecrate the sacredness of property and authority, of ideologies and institutions, of all the gods, temples and fetishes whatever their basis. Only in this way can we experience all of the inner and outer worlds as our own, on the basis of the only equality that can interest us, the equal recognition of what is wonderful in the singularity of each one of us. Only in this way can we experience and create the marvelous in all of its beauty and wonder.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

In the struggle to take back our lives, it is necessary to call every institution into question, even those that reach into the most intimate aspects of our lives. In fact, it is particularly important to challenge these institutions, because their closeness to us, their intimacy, can make them appear not to be institutions at all, but rather the most natural of relationships. And then they can work their insidious ploys and make domination itself appear natural.

Family relationships are taken for granted, even by most anarchists. It is precisely the intimacy of these relationships that makes them appear so natural. And yet the family as we know it—the nuclear family, that ideal unit for commodity consumption—is just a little more than a half a century old, and is already in a state of disintegration. And earlier forms of family relationships seem to reflect the requirements of economic necessity or social cohesion rather than any natural inclination.

The institution of the family goes hand in hand with the institution of marriage. If in non-state societies marriage has tended to be a very loose bond which was aimed primarily at maintaining certain sorts of kinship relationships, with the rise of the state and of property, it became a much tighter relationship, in fact a relationship of ownership. More specifically, marriage became that institution in which the father, recognized as the owner of his family, gave his daughter to another man who then, as her husband, became her new owner. Thus, the family is the seat of the domination of women that spreads from there to all of society.

Within the family, though, there is a further hierarchy. The central purpose of the family is the reproduction of society, and this requires the reproduction of human beings. Thus, the wife is expected to bear children, and the children, though still ultimately owned by the man, are under the direct authority of their mother. This is why many of us who grow up in families in which the so-called "traditional" gender roles were accepted, in fact, experienced our ***mothers*** as the first authority to dominate us. Dad was a distant figure, working his 60 to 70 hours a week (despite the supposed labor victory of the 40-hour work week) to provide his family with all the things that this society claims are necessary for the good life. Mom scolded us, spanked us, set our limits, strove to define our lives —like the manager at the workplace, who is the daily face of the boss, while the owner remains mostly invisible.

So the real social purpose of the family is the reproduction of human beings. This does not merely mean giving birth to children, but also transforming this human raw material into a being useful to society—a loyal subject, a good citizen, an industrious worker, an avid consumer. So from the moment of birth, it is necessary that mother and father begin to train the child. It is on this level that we can understand the immediate exclamation: "It's a boy!" "It's a girl!" Gender is the one social role that can be assessed from biology at birth, and so it is the first to be imposed through a variety of symbols—colors of nursery walls and blankets, clothing styles, toys offered for play, the kinds of games encouraged, and so on.

But this happens in conjunction with an emphasis on childishness as well. Rather than encouraging independence, self-reliance and the capacity to make their own decisions and act on them, children are encouraged to act naïve, inept, lacking the capacity to reason and act sensibly. This is all considered "cute" and "cuteness" is supposed to be the primary trait of children. Although most children, in fact, use "cuteness" quite

cleverly as a way to get around the demands of adults, the social reinforcement of this trait, nonetheless, supports and extends helplessness and dependence long enough for social conditioning to take hold, for servility to become a habit. At this point, "cuteness" begins to be discouraged and mocked as childishness.

Since the normal relationship between a parent and their child is one of ***ownership*** and thus of domination and submission on the most intimate level, the wiles through which children survive this end up becoming the habitual methods they use to interact with the world, a network of defense mechanisms that Wilhelm Reich has referred to as character armoring. This may, indeed, be the most horrifying aspect of the family —it's conditioning ***and our attempts to defend ourselves against it*** can scar us for life.

In fact, the fears, phobias and defenses instilled in us by the authority of the family tend to enforce the reproduction of the family structure. The ways in which parents reinforce and extend the incapacity of children guarantee that their desires remain beyond their own reach and under the parents' —that is, authority's—control. This is true even of parents who "spoil" their children, since such spoiling generally takes the form of channeling the child's desires toward commodity consumption. Unable to realize their own desires, children quickly learn to expect lack and to kiss ass in the hope of gaining a little of what they want. Thus, the economic ideology of work and commodity consumption is engrained into us by the relationships forced upon us in childhood. When we reach adolescence and our sexual urges become more focused, the lack we have been taught to expect causes us to be easily led into economized conceptions of love and sex. When we get into a relationship, we will tend to see it as one of ownership, often reinforced with some symbolic token. Those who don't economize their sexual urges adequately are stigmatized,

particularly if they are girls. We cling to relationships with a desperation that reflects the very real scarcity of love and pleasure in this world. And those who have been taught so well that they are incapable of truly realizing their own desires finally accept that if they cannot own, or even truly ***recognize***, their own desires, at least they can define the limits of another's desires, who in turn defines the limits of theirs. It is safe. It is secure. And it is miserable. It is ***the couple***, the precursor of the family.

The desperate fear of the scarcity of love, thus, reproduces the conditions that maintain this scarcity. The attempt to explore and experiment with ways of loving that escape the institutionalization of love and desire in the couple, in the family, in marriage perpetually runs up against economized love. This should come as no surprise since certainly this is the appropriate form for love to take in a society dominated by the economy.

Yet the economic usefulness of the family also exposes its poverty. In pre-industrial societies (and to some extent in industrial societies previous to the rise of consumerism), the economic reality of the family resided largely in the usefulness of each family member in carrying out essential tasks for the survival of the family. Thus, the unity of the family served a purpose relating to basic needs and tended to be extended beyond the nuclear family unit. But in the West, with the rise of consumerism after World War II, the economic role of the family changed. Its purpose was now to reproduce consumers representing various target markets. Thus, the family became the factory for producing housewives, teenagers, school kids, all beings whose capacities to realize their desire has been destroyed so that it can be channeled into commodity consumption. The family remains necessary as the means for reproducing these roles within individual human beings, but since the family itself is no longer the defining limit of

impoverished desire – that role now played by the commodity —there is no real basis left for family cohesion. Thus, we see the current horror of the breakdown of the family without its destruction. And few people are able to conceive of a full life involving intimacy and love without it.

If we are to truly take back our lives in their totality, if we are to truly liberate our desires from the chains of fear and of the commodity, we must strive to understand all that has chained as, and we must take action to attack and destroy it all. Thus, in attacking the institutions that enslave us, we cannot forget to attack that most intimate source of our slavery, the family.

WHY DO WE ALL LIVE IN PRISON?
Prison, Law and Social Control

There is a place in this society where one is perpetually under surveillance, where every movement is monitored and controlled, where everyone is under suspicion except the police and their bosses, where all are assumed to be criminals. I am speaking, of course, of prison…

But at an ever-quickening pace, this description is coming to fit more and more public spaces. Shopping malls and the business districts of major cities are under video surveillance. Armed guards patrol schools, libraries, hospitals and museums. One is subject to search at airports and bus stations. Police helicopters fly over cities and even ***forests*** in search of crime. The methodology of imprisonment, which is one with the methodology of the police, is gradually being imposed over the entire social landscape.

This process is being imposed through fear, and the authorities justify it to us in terms of our need for protection – from criminals, from terrorists, from drugs and violence. But who

are these criminals and terrorists, who are these monsters that threaten us every moment of our fear-filled lives? A moment's careful consideration is enough to answer this question. In the eyes of the rulers of this world, *we* are the criminals and terrorists, *we* are the monsters—at least potentially. After all, *we* are the ones they are policing and monitoring. ***We*** are the ones who are watched on the video-cameras and searched at the bus stations. One can only wonder if it is the fact that this is so ***glaringly*** obvious that makes people blind to it.

The rule of fear is such that the social order even solicits our aid in our own policing. Parents register their toddlers' fingerprints with police agencies connected with the FBI. A Florida-based company called Applied Digital Solutions (ADS) has created the "Veri-Chip" (aka the "Digital Angel") that can hold personal, medical and other information and is intended to be implanted under the skin. Their idea is to promote its voluntary use by people, of course, ***for their own protection***. It may soon be connected to the network of the Global Positioning System (GPS) Satellite so that anyone with the implant could be monitored constantly.* In addition there are dozens of programs that encourage snitching – a factor that is also reminiscent of prisons where the authorities seek out and reward snitches. Of course other prisoners have a rather different attitude toward these scum.

But all of this is purely descriptive, a picture of the social prison that is being built around us. A real understanding of this situation that we can use to fight against this process requires a deeper analysis. In fact, prison and policing rest on the idea that there are crimes, and this idea rests on the law. Law is portrayed as an objective reality by which the actions

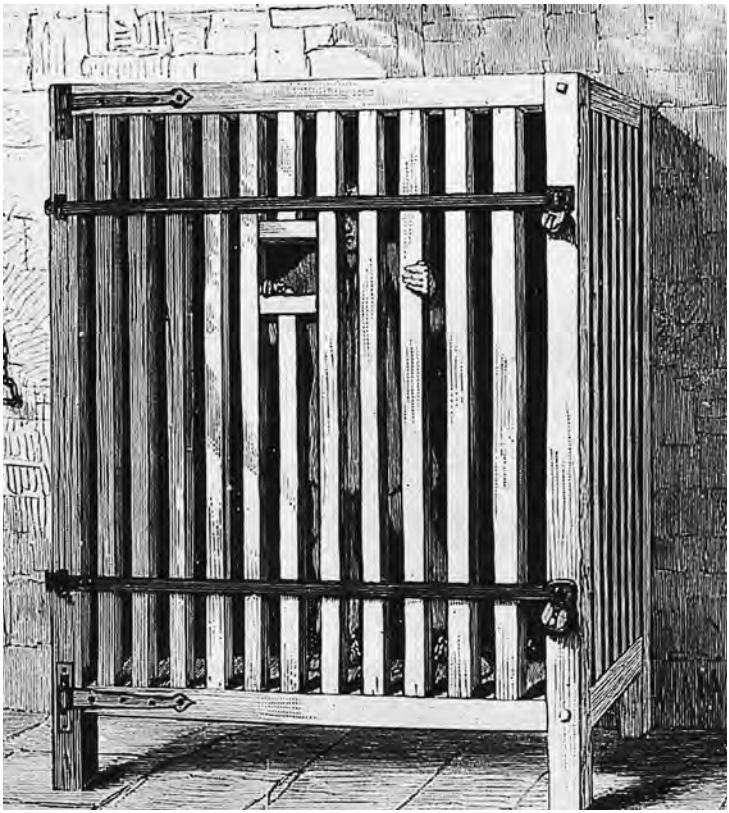
* There is a technology device currently in widespread use that can also help police in tracking someone down. I am speaking of the cellular phone. Although it apparently cannot lead the police directly to on individual, with the right technology they can discover someone's general vicinity. This helped cops make an arrest in St. Louis last November.

of the citizens of a state can be judged. Law, in fact, creates a kind of equality. Anatole France expressed this ironically by pointing out that before the law, beggars and kings alike were forbidden from stealing bread and sleeping under bridges. From this, it is clear that before the law we all become equal, simply because we all become ***ciphers***, non-entities without individual feelings, relationships, desires and needs.

The objective of law is to regulate society. The necessity for the regulation of a society implies that it is not meeting the needs or fulfilling the desires of everyone within it. It rather exists as an imposition on a greater part of those who make it up. Of course, such a situation could only come to exist where ***inequality*** of the most significant kind exists—the inequality of access to the means for creating one's life on one's own terms. For those with the upper hand, this state of social inequality has the dual name of property and power. For those on the bottom, its name is poverty and subjection. Law is the lie that transforms this inequality into an equality that serves the masters of society.

In a situation in which everyone had full and equal access to all that they need to fulfill themselves and create their lives on their own terms, a wealth of individual differences would flourish. A vast array of dreams and desires would express themselves creating an apparently infinite spectrum of passions, loves and hatreds, conflicts and affinities. This equality in which neither property nor power would exist would thus express the frightening and beautiful non-hierarchical inequality of individuality.

Contrarily, where the inequality of access to the means for creating one's life exists—i.e., where the vast majority of people have been dispossessed of their own lives—everyone becomes equal, because *everyone* becomes nothing. This is true even of those with property and power, because their status in society is not based on who they are, but on ***what they have***.



The property and the power (which always resides in a ***role*** and not in an individual) are all that have worth in this society. Equality before the law serves the rulers, precisely because its aim is to preserve the order in which they rule. Equality before the law disguises social inequality precisely behind that which maintains it.

But, of course, law does not maintain the social order ***as words***. The word of the law would be meaningless without physical force behind it. And that physical force exists in the systems of enforcement and punishment: the police, judicial and prison systems. Equality before the law is, in fact, a very thin veneer for hiding the inequality of access to the conditions of existence, the means for creating our lives on our terms. Reality breaks through this veneer constantly, and its control can only be maintained by force and through fear.

From the perspective of the rulers of this world, we are, indeed, all criminals (at least potentially), all monsters threatening their tranquil sleep, because we are all potentially capable of seeing through the veil of the law and choosing to ignore it and take back the moments of our lives whenever we can on our own terms. Thus, law, itself, (and the social order of property and power which require it) makes us equal precisely by criminalizing us. It is, therefore, the logical outcome of law and the social order that produces it that imprisonment and policing would become universal, hand in hand with the development of the global supermarket.

In this light, it should be clear that there is no use in making laws more just. There is no use in seeking to monitor the police. There is no use in trying to reform this system, because every reform will inevitably play back into the system, increasing the number of laws, increasing the level of monitoring and policing, making the world even more like a prison. There is only one way to respond to this situation, if we would have our lives as our own. To attack this society in order to destroy it.

AFTERWORD:
Destroy Civilization?

I assume that all anarchists would agree that we want to put an end to every institution, structure and system of domination and exploitation. The rejection of these things is, after all, the basic meaning of anarchism. Most would also agree that among these institutions, structures and systems are the state, private property, religion, law, the patriarchal family, class rule…

In recent years, some anarchists have begun to talk in what appears to be broader terms of the need to destroy civilization. This has, of course, led to a reaction in defense of civilization. Unfortunately, this debate has been mainly acrimonious, consisting of name-calling, mutual misrepresentation and territorial disputes over the ownership of the label "anarchist", rather than real argumentation. One of the problems (though probably not the most significant one) behind this incapacity to really debate the question is that very few individual on either side of it have tried to explain precisely what they mean by "civilization". Instead, it remains a nebulous term that represents all that is bad for one side and all that is good for the other.

In order to develop a more precise definition of civilization, it is worthwhile to examine when and where civilization is said to have arisen and what differences actually exist between societies currently defined as civilized and those not considered. Such an examination shows that the existence of animal husbandry, agriculture, a sedentary way of life, a refinement of arts, crafts and techniques or even the simply forms of metal smelting are not enough to define a society as civilized (though

they do comprise the necessary material basis for the rise of civilization). Rather what arose about ten thousand years ago in the "cradle of civilization" and what is shared by all civilized societies but lacking in all those that are defined as "uncivilized" is a network of institutions, structures and systems that impose social relationships of dominations and exploitation. In other words, a civilized society is one comprised of the state, property, religion (or in modern societies, ideology), law, the patriarchal family, commodity exchange, class rule—everything we, as anarchists, oppose.

To put it another way, what all civilized societies have in common is the systematic expropriation of the lives of those who live within them. The critique of domestication (with any moral underpinnings removed) provides a useful tool for understanding this. What is domestication, if not the expropriation of the life of a being by another who then exploits that life for her or his own purposes? Civilization is thus the systematic and institutionalized domestication of the vast majority of people in a society by the few who are served by the network of domination.

Thus the revolutionary process of reappropriating our lives is a process of decivilizing ourselves, of throwing off our domestication. This does not mean becoming passive slaves to our instincts (if such even exist) or dissolving ourselves in the alleged oneness of Nature. It means becoming uncontrollable individuals capable of making and carrying out the decisions that affect our lives in free association with others.

It should be obvious from this that I reject any models for an ideal world (and distrust any vision that is too perfect – I suspect that there, the individual has disappeared). Since the essence of a revolutionary struggle fitting with anarchist ideals is the reappropriation of life by individuals who have been exploited, dispossessed and dominated, it would be in the process of this struggle that people would decide

how they want to create their lives, what in this world they feel they can appropriate to increase their freedom, open possibilities and add to their enjoyment, and what would only be a burden stealing from the joy of life and undermining possibilities for expanding freedom. I don't see how such a process could possibly create any single, universal social model. Rather, innumerable experiments varying drastically from place to place and changing over time would reflect the singular needs, desires, dreams and aspirations of each and every individual.

So, indeed, let's destroy civilization, this network of domination, but not in the name of any model, of an ascetic morality of sacrifice or of a mystical disintegration into a supposedly unalienated oneness with Nature, but rather because the reappropriation of our lives, the collective re-creation of ourselves as uncontrollable and unique individuals is the destruction of civilization—of this ten thousand year old network of domination that has spread itself over the globe—and the initiation of a marvelous and frightening journey into the unknown that is freedom.

Volume Four

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ON PROJECTUALITY

"Anarchism… is a way of conceiving life, and life… is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day. When we wake up in the morning and put our feet on the ground we must have a good reason for getting up. If we don't it makes no difference whether we are anarchists or not… And to have a good reason we must know what we want to do…"

—Alfredo M. Bonanno

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts that I have tried to express in *Willful Disobedience* is that of anarchist projectuality. The difficulty in expressing this concept does not merely stem from the fact that the word is unusual. Far more significant is the fact that the concept itself stands in total opposition to the way in which this social order trains us to exist.

In this society, we are taught to view life as something that happens to us, something that exists outside of us, into which we are thrown. We are not, however, told that this is the result of a process of dispossession, and so this alienation appears to be natural, an inevitable consequence of being alive. When life is perceived in this way, the vast majority of people simply deal with circumstances as they come along, for the most part simply accepting their lot, occasionally protesting specific situations, but in precisely those ways that acceptance of a pre-determined, alienated existence permits. A few people take a more managerial approach to this alienated existence. Rather than simply dealing with circumstances as they come, they seek to reform alienated existence along programmatic lines, creating blueprints for a modified existence, but one that

is still determined in advance into which individuals must be fitted.

One can find examples of both of these tendencies within the anarchist movement. The first tendency can be seen in those anarchists who conceive of revolution as an event that will hopefully eventually happen to them when the masses arise, and who in the meantime face their life with a kind of pragmatic, circumstantial immediatism. A principled anarchist practice is considered "impossible" and is sacrificed to the amelioration of immediate conditions "by any means necessary"—including litigation, petition to the authorities, the promotion of legislation and so on. The second tendency manifests in such programmatic perspectives as platformism, libertarian municipalism and anarcho-syndicalism. These perspectives tend to reduce revolution to a question of how the economic, political and social institutions that control our lives are to be managed. Reflecting the methods by which people cope with alienated existence, neither of these methods actually challenges such an existence.

Anarchist projectuality starts with the decision to reappropriate life here and now. It, therefore, immediately and forcefully exposes and challenges the process of dispossession that this society imposes and acts to destroy all the institutions of domination and exploitation. This decision is not based on whether this reappropriation is presently possibly or not, but on the recognition that it is the absolutely necessary first step for opening possibilities for the total transformation of existence. Thus when I speak of anarchist projectuality, I am speaking of a way of facing life and struggle in which the active refusal of alienated existence and the reappropriation of life are not future aims, but are one's present method for acting in the world.

Anarchist projectuality cannot exist as a program. Programs are based on the idea of social life as a thing separated from the individuals that make it up. They define how life is to be and

strive to make individuals fit into this definition. For this reason, programs have little capacity for dealing with the realities of everyday life and tend to confront the circumstances of living in a ritualized and formalized manner. Anarchist projectuality exists instead as a consciously lived tension toward freedom, as an ongoing daily struggle to discover and create the ways to determine one's existence with others in uncompromising opposition to all domination and exploitation.

So anarchist projectuality does confront the immediate circumstances of an alienated daily existence, but refuses the circumstantial pragmatism of "by any means necessary", instead creating means that already carry the ends within themselves. To clarify what I mean, I will give a hypothetical example. Let's take the problem of the police. We all know that the police intrude upon the lives of all of the exploited. It is not a problem that can be ignored. And, of course, as anarchists, we want the destruction of the police system in its totality. A programmatic approach to this would tend to start from the idea that we must determine the essential useful tasks that police supposedly carry out (controlling or suppressing "anti-social" behavior, for example). Then we must try to create self-managed methods for carrying out these tasks without the police, rendering them unnecessary. A pragmatic, circumstantial approach would simply examine all the excesses and atrocities of the police and seek to find ways of ameliorating those atrocities—through lawsuits, the setting up of civilian police review boards, proposals for stricter legislative control of police activity, etc. Neither of these methodologies, in fact, questions policing as such. The programmatic methodology simply calls for policing to become the activity of society as a whole carried out in a self-managed manner, rather than the task of a specialized group. The pragmatic, circumstantial approach actually amounts to policing the police, and so increases the level of policing in

society. An anarchist projectual approach would start from the absolute rejection of policing as such. The problem with the police system is not that it is a system separate from the rest of society, nor that it falls into excesses and atrocities (as significant as these are). The problem with the police system is inherent to what it is: a system for controlling or suppressing "anti-social" behavior, i.e., for conforming individuals to the needs of society. Thus, the question in play is that of how to destroy the police system in its totality. This is the starting point for developing specific actions against police activity. Clear connections have to be made between every branch of the system of social control. We need to make connections between prison struggles and the struggles of the exploited where they live (including the necessity of illegality as a way of surviving with some dignity in this world). We need to clarify the connections between the police system, the legal system, the prison system, the war machine—in other words between every aspect of the system of control through which the power of capital and the state is maintained. This does not mean that every action and statement would have to explicitly express a full critique, but rather that this critique would be implicit in the methodology used. Thus, our methodology would be one of autonomous direct action and attack. The tools of policing surround us everywhere. The targets are not hard to find. Consider, for example, the proliferation of video cameras throughout the social terrain…

But this is simply an example to clarify matters. Anarchist projectuality is, in fact, a confrontation with existence "at daggers drawn" as one comrade so beautifully expressed it, a way of facing life. But since human life is a life with others, the reappropriation of life here and now must also mean the reappropriation of our life together. It means developing relations of affinity, finding the accomplices for carrying out our projects on our terms. And since the very point of

projectuality is to free ourselves here and now from the passivity that this society imposes on us, we cannot simply wait for chance to bring these people into our paths. This point is particularly important in the present era, when public space is becoming increasingly monitored, privatized or placed under state control, making chance meetings of any significance increasingly impossible. This desire to find accomplices is what moves me to publish Willful Disobedience. But it calls for other projects as well. Taking back space—whether for an evening or on a more permanent basis—for meeting and discussion, creating situations where real knowledge of each other can be discovered and developed, is essential. And this cannot be restricted to those who call themselves anarchists. Our accomplices may be found anywhere among the exploited, where there are people fed up with their existence who have no faith left in the current social order. For this reason, discovering ways to appropriate public spaces for face-to-face interactions is essential to the development of a projectual practice. But discussion in this case is not aimed essentially at discovering a "common ground" among all concerned. It is rather aimed at discovering specific affinities. Therefore, discussion must be a frank, clear expression of one's projects and aims, one's dreams and desires.

In short, anarchist projectuality is the practical recognition in one's life that anarchy is not just an aim for the distant future, an ideal that we hope to experience in a far away utopia. Much more essentially, it is a way of confronting life and struggle, a way that puts us at odds with the world as it is. It is grasping our own lives as a weapon and as a stake to be played against the existence that has been imposed on us. When the intensity of our passion for freedom and our desire to make our lives our own pushes us to live in a different manner, all the tools and methods offered by this world cease to be appealing, because all that they can do is adjust the machine that controls our

lives. When we make the choice to cease to be a cog, when we make the choice to break the machine rather than continuing to adjust it, passivity ceases and projectuality begins.

FOR A WORLD ABSOLUTELY OTHER

Life unbridled, a venture into the absolute other, requires the total destruction not only of 'my' work, but of the very concept of work and economy as the basis of human relationships.
—Jean Weir

If the anarchist project can seem incomprehensible to those who have learned to accept the necessity of being ruled, who have learned to prefer security to freedom, that project understood in its totality, as the complete overturning of all social relations based on obligation and compulsion, can even be incomprehensible to many anarchists. The idea of the destruction of work is frequently met with incomprehension. And this comes in more than one form.

The most frequent form of incomprehension I have encountered when I have spoken of the destruction of work is that which simply exclaims: "But we have to eat!" In certain ways this reaction is quite similar to the response to the call for the destruction of prisons, cops and states which cries: "But then rape, robbery and murder would run rampant!" It is a response that stems from habit—we have always lived a certain way. Within this way specific institutions are said to fulfill specific needs—thus, work and the economy are the institutional framework through which food is provided within the present system of social relationships, and we know of no others (except by rumor). So the thought of a world without work evokes visions of starvation precisely at the point where the capacity to dream stops.

Another form of incomprehension involves confusion over what work is. This stems in part from the fact that the word can be used in ambiguous ways. I may, indeed, say that I am "working" on an article for WD or on a translation. But when I am doing these things, it is, in fact, not work, because there is nothing compelling me to do them, I have no obligation to do them; I do them solely for my own pleasure. And here is where the basic meaning of work and its destruction becomes clear.

Work is an economic social relationship based upon compulsion. The institutions of property and commodity exchange place a price tag upon survival. This forces each of us to find ways to buy our survival or to accept the utter precariousness of a life of constant theft. In the former case, we can only buy our survival precisely by selling large portions of our lives away—this is why we refer to work as wage slavery —a slave is one whose life is owned by another, and when we work, capital owns our lives. And with the world domination of capital, increasingly the totality of existence is permeated by the world of work—there is no moment that is our own unless we ferociously rip it from the grip of this world. Though it is true that wage slavery cannot be equated with chattel slavery, it is also true that the masters of this world, in referring to us as "human resources", make it very clear how they view us. So survival with a price tag is always opposed to life and work is the form this opposition takes.

But theft (and its poor cousin, dumpster diving) does not in itself free us from work. "Even robbing banks or reappropriating goods remains within the logic of capital if the individual perpetrator of the deed does not already have their own project in motion" (Jean Weir). And here is one of the most common misunderstandings of an anti-work perspective: confusing the avoidance of having a job with the attack on the world of work. This confusion manifests in a practical emphasis on methods for surviving without a job. Thus, survival continues

to take precedence over life. One encounters so many people now within certain anarchist-influenced subcultures, who know where all the dumpsters, all the free feeds, all the easy shoplifting stores, etc. are, but who have no concept of what to do with their lives beyond surviving on the streets. The individual with a clear idea of her project who, for example, chooses to take a job temporarily at a printers in order to learn the skills and steal as much material as she needs to start her own anarchist publishing projecting—quitting the job as soon as his projectual tasks are accomplished—is acting far more pointedly against the world of work than the individual who spends his days wandering from dumpster to dumpster, thinking only of how he's avoided a job.

Work is a social relationship or, more precisely, part of a network of social relationships based upon domination and exploitation. The destruction of work (as opposed to its mere avoidance), therefore, cannot be accomplished by a single individual. One who tried would still find herself trapped within the world of work, forced to deal with its realities and the choices it imposes. Nor can work be destroyed separately from the complete destruction of the system of social relationships of which it is a part. Thus, the attack against work starts from our struggle to reapproriate our lives. But this struggle encounters the walls of the prison that surrounds us everywhere, and so must become the struggle to destroy an entire social world, because only in a world that is absolutely other, what some have called a "world turned upside-down", will our lives ever truly be our own. Now we can snatch moments and spaces—and indeed this is necessary in order to give us the time to reflect upon what we, as individuals, really want to do with our lives. But the task remains before us of breaking down the prison walls.

In fact, the anarchist insurrectionary project, whether thought of in terms of work, the state, the family, the economy,

property, technology, religion, law or any other institutions of domination, remains the same. The world of domination is one. The institutions form a network, and one cannot escape through the cracks. We must destroy the net and adventure into the unknown, having made the decision to find ways to relate and create our exist that are absolutely other, ways that we can experiment now, but only in our struggle to destroy this world, because only in this struggle can we snatch the time and space we need for such experiments. And in speaking of a world that is absolutely other, there is little one can say. When asked, "But if we destroy work, how will we eat?", all one can say is, "We will figure that out as we go along." And, of course, that is not satisfying for those who want easy answers. But if our desire is to make our lives our own, and if this requires a world that is absolutely other than the social world in which we live, we cannot expect to have the words for that world. Where would we find them here, where even the primitivists must resort to economic comparisons and an accounting of hours of work to valorize their utopia? As we destroy the old world and experiment with new ways to live, the words will come, if they are desired. Their shadows are sometimes visible in poetry, but if we realize our lives poetically, will we even still desire the words?

THE RISING OF THE BARBARIANS:
A Non-Primitivist Revolt Against Civilization

If we examine much of the current debate in anarchist circles surrounding civilization, technology, progress, green anarchy versus red anarchy and so on, we are left with the impression that criticism of civilization has only recently arisen within anarchist and revolutionary thinking. But this impression is false, and harmful for those of us with a revolutionary anti-civilization perspective.

In fact, a revolutionary questioning of civilization, of technology and of progress can be found throughout the history of modern revolutionary thinking. Charles Fourier posed his utopian socialist "Harmony" against the disharmony of "Civilization". A number of the most radical of the Romantics (Blake, Byron and Shelly among others) were distinctly distrustful of industrialism and its utilitarian reason.

But we can bring things closer to home by looking at anarchists of the 19th century. Certainly Bakunin had no problem with industrial technology. Though he didn't share Marx's almost mystical faith in the capacity of industrial development to create the technical basis for global communism, he also did not see anything inherently dominating in the structure of industrial systems. In fact, his concept of workers taking over the organization of society through their own economic and industrial organizations was to eventually become the basis of anarcho-syndicalism. (This development, however, is based on a misunderstanding, since Bakunin quite clearly stated that this organization was not something that could be developed on an ideological basis outside of the direct struggle of the workers, but rather that it was something that the

workers would develop for themselves in the course of their struggles. He therefore did not suggest any specific form for it.) Nonetheless, Bakunin's appeals to the "unleashing of the wicked passions" of the oppressed and exploited were seen by many of the more reasonable revolutionaries of the time as a barbaric call for the destruction of civilization. And Bakunin himself did call for "the annihilation of bourgeois civilization" along with "the destruction of all States" and the "free and spontaneous organization from below upward, by means of free associations". But Bakunin's French contemporary, Ernest Coeurderoy, was less conditional in his rejection of civilization. He says simply: "In civilization, I vegetate; I am neither happy, nor free; why then should I desire this homicidal order to be conserved? There is no longer anything to conserve of that which the earth suffers." And he, along with Dejacque and other anarchist revolutionaries of that time, appeals to the barbaric spirit of destruction to bring an end to the civilization of domination.

Of course, the majority of anarchists at that time, as in our own, did not question civilization, technology or progress. Kropotkin's vision of communized "Factories, Fields and Workshops" or Josiah Warren's "True Civilization" inevitably have more appeal to those who are not prepared to face the unknown than the anarchist critiques of industrialism and civilization that often offer no clear vision of what will be after the revolutionary destruction of the civilization that they hate.

The early 20th century, and particularly the great massacre known as World War 1, brought a major overturning of values. Faith in the bourgeois ideal of progress was thoroughly eroded and the questioning of civilization itself was a significant aspect of a number of radical movements including dadaism, Russian anarcho-futurism and early surrealism. If most of the better known anarchists (such as Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Mahkno and so on) continued to see the possibility of a

liberated industrial civilization, other lesser known anarchists saw a different vision. Thus, around 1919, Bruno Filippi wrote:

> *I envy the savages. And I will cry to them in a loud voice: "Save yourselves, civilization is coming."*
>
> *Of course: our dear civilization of which we are so proud. We have abandoned the free and happy life of the forest for this horrendous moral and material slavery. And we are maniacs, neurasthenics, suicides.*
>
> *Why should I care that civilization has given humanity wings to fly so that it can bomb cities, why should I care if I know every star in the sky or every river on earth?*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *Today, the starry vault is a leaden veil that we vainly endeavor to pass through; today it is no longer unknown, it is distrusted.*
>
> *[…] I don't give a damn for their progress; I want to live and enjoy.*

Now, I want to be clear. I am not bringing all of this up in order to prove that the present-day anti-civilization current has a legitimate anarchist heritage. If its critique of the reality we face is accurate, why should we care whether it fits into some framework of anarchist orthodoxy? But Bakunin and Coeurderoy, Malatesta and Filippi, all of the anarchists of the past who lived in struggle against domination, as they understood it were not trying to create any ideological orthodoxy. They were participating in the process of creating a revolutionary anarchist theory and practice that would be an ongoing process. This process has included critiques of civilization, critiques of progress and critiques of technology (and often in the past these critiques were not connected, so that, for example, Bakunin could call for "the annihilation of bourgeois civilization" and still embrace its technological

outgrowth, industrialism, and Marcus Graham could call for the destruction of "the machine" in favor of an unmechanized civilization). We are living in different times. The words of Bakunin or Coeurderoy, of Malatesta or Renzo Novatore, or of any of the anarchist writers of the past cannot be taken as a program or a doctrine to be followed. Rather they form an arsenal to be looted. And among the weapons in that arsenal are barbaric battering rams that can be used against the walls of civilization, of the myth of progress, of the long-since disproven myth that technology can save us from our woes.

We are living in a world in which technology has certainly gone out of control. As catastrophe follows catastrophe, so-called "human" landscapes become increasingly controlled and mechanized, and human beings increasingly conformed to their roles as cogs in the social machine. Historically the thread that has gone through all that is best in the anarchist movement has not been a faith in civilization or technology or progress, but rather the desire for every individual to be free to create her or his life as he or she sees fit in free association others, in other words, the desire for the individual and collective reappropriation of life. And this desire is still what motivates anarchist struggle. At this point it is clear to me that the technological system is an integral part of the network of domination. It has been developed to serve the interests of the rulers of this world. One of the primary purposes of large-scale technological systems is the maintenance and expansion of social control, and this requires a technological system that is largely self-maintaining, needing only minimal human intervention. Thus, a juggernaut is created. The recognition that progress had no inherent connection to human liberation was already recognized by many revolutionaries by the end of World War I. Certainly the history of the 20th century should have reinforced this understanding. We look out now on a physically, socially and psychically devastated world,

the result of all that has been called progress. The exploited and dispossessed of this world can no longer seriously desire to get a piece of this putrefying pie, nor to take it over and "self-manage" it. The reappropriation of life must have a different meaning in the present world. In light of the social transformations of the past few decades, it seems to me that any serious revolutionary anarchist movement would have to call industrialism and civilization itself into question precisely because anything less may not provide us with the necessary tools for taking back our lives as our own.

But my anti-civilization perspective is not a primitivist perspective. While it may indeed be inspiring to look at the apparently anarchic and communistic aspects of some "primitive" cultures, I do not base my critique on a comparison between these cultures and the current reality, but rather on the way in which all of the various institutions that comprise civilization act together to take my life from me and turn it into a tool for social reproduction, and how they transform social life into a productive process serving only to maintain the rulers and their social order. Thus, it is essentially a revolutionary perspective, and this is why I will always make use of anything in that arsenal which is the history of revolutionary theory and practice that can enhance my struggle. "Primitive" people have often lived in anarchic and communistic ways, but they do not have a history of revolutionary struggle from which we can loot weapons for our current struggle. Having said this, however, I do recognize those anarcho-primitivists who continue to recognize the necessity of revolution and class struggle as my comrades and potential accomplices.

Revolutionary struggle against the civilization of control and profit that surrounds us will not be the reasonable attempt to take over means of production. The dispossessed of this world seem to understand that this is no longer an option for

liberation (if it ever was). If most are not clear about precisely who or what is the enemy, most do understand that they have nothing to say to those in power, because they no longer share a common language. We who have been dispossessed by this world now know that we can expect nothing from it. If we dream of another world, we cannot express that dream, because this world does not provide the words for it. And most likely many no longer dream. They just feel rage at the continuing degradation of their existence. So this revolution will, indeed, be the release of the "wicked passions" of which Bakunin spoke, the destructive passions that are the only door to a free existence. It will be the coming of the barbarians predicted by Dejacque and Coeurderoy. But it is precisely when people know that they no longer have anything to say to their rulers, that they may learn how to talk with each other. It is precisely when people know that the possibilities of this world can offer them nothing that they may learn how to dream the impossible. This network of institutions that dominate our life, this civilization, has turned our world into a toxic prison. There is so much to be destroyed so that a free existence may be created. The time of the barbarians is at hand.

[…] May the barbarians break loose. May they sharpen their swords, may they brandish their battleaxes, may they strike their enemies without pity. May hatred take the place of tolerance, may fury take the place of resignation, may outrage take the place of respect. May the barbarian hordes go to the assault, autonomously, in the way that they determine. And may no parliament, no credit institution, no supermarket, no barracks, no factory ever grow again after their passage. In the face of the concrete that rises to strike the sky and the pollution that fouls it, one can well say with Dejacque that "It is not the darkness that the Barbarians will bring to the world this time, it is the light."—Crisso/Odoteo

COMPLICITY, NOT DEBT

An anarchist basis for solidarity

"We owe each other nothing, for what I seem to owe to you, I owe at most to myself."—**Max Stirner**

None of us owes anyone anything. This should be a guiding principle behind all anarchist practice. All systems of power, all hierarchies and all economic relationships are justified by the idea that each of us as individuals owes her existence to the collectivity that is this social order. This is a debt without end, an eternal obligation that can never be fulfilled, which keeps us chained to a cycle of activity that maintains this society. Our aim as anarchists and insurrectionaries is the complete overturning precisely of this cycle of activity, of the social relationships that rule over our lives. What better place to start than the absolute refusal of the most basic of economic and political principles: debt.

Unfortunately, much of the social struggle that is currently going on bases itself on economic/political assumptions, and particularly that of debt. People speak of reparations, of getting what is owed, what is one's by right. This even extends into the way we talk of class struggle when the idea of "taking back what is truly ours" is taken to mean that which we have a right to because we have "earned" it – i.e., the idea that "the product should belong to the producer". This way of conceiving class struggle keeps it firmly within the economy, which it is in our interest to destroy.

The economic/political methodology of struggle opposes privilege with rights. In doing so, it assumes that the individual is dependent upon a higher power, the power that grants rights and privileges (i.e., the existing social order). In fact, rights and privileges are really the same thing: limited freedoms that

a higher power grants to one due to some inherent or earned value that this power recognizes in one. Thus, the opposition of rights to privilege is a false opposition. It is nothing more than a disagreement over how the higher power should value us and an appeal to it to recognize our value. As such the struggle for rights is nothing more than a struggle to sell oneself at a higher price. At its most radical, it becomes the attempt to sell everyone at the same price. But some of us do not want to be sold at all.

The kind of "solidarity" this method of struggle creates is a relationship of service based on the conception of debt. When you demand that I give up "my privilege", you are not just demanding that I sacrifice something to your conception of struggle. More significantly, you are assuming that I recognize this privilege, define myself in the terms necessary for earning it and owe it to you to give it up. To use an example, let's say that you demand that I give up my male privilege. There are a few assumptions in this: 1) that I see myself as essentially male; 2) that I own this privilege and can thus dispose of it as I will; and 3) that I owe it to you to give this up, i.e., that I have a debt to you due to my maleness. But I do not, in fact, see myself essentially as a male, but rather as a unique individual, as myself. You may correctly respond that this sexist society, nonetheless, does perceive me as male and grants me specific privileges as such which act to your detriment. But here we see that I do not own this privilege, nor do I own the maleness upon which it is bestowed. Rather these are imposed on me by the social order. The fact that they may work to my advantage in relation to you does not make them any less an imposition upon me as a unique individual. In fact, this advantage acts as a bribe through which the rulers of this society attempt to persuade me not to unite with you against it. But this bribe will only work to the extent to which I perceive the advantage of the male privilege granted to me by this society to be of greater value to me than my

capacity to define my own sexuality and create my relationships with others of whatever gender on my own terms. When I recognize this society as my enemy, I recognize all the privileges and rights that it grants as enemies as well, as impositions and limitations it places upon my individuality. Since male privilege is something granted, and therefore, defined and owned by the social order, even if we remain within the economic/political framework of struggle, it is not I, but this social order that is in debt to you. But as we have seen above, the very conceptions of "privilege" and "right" depend upon the idea of a rightful dispenser that stands above us and decides what we deserve. The social order is that dispenser. Thus, it cannot be said that it owes you anything. Rather it dispenses what it owns on its terms, and if you disagree with those terms, this does not make you its creditor, but its enemy. And only as the enemy of this social order can you truly be the enemy of privilege, but then you also become the enemy of "rights". As long as you do not decide to reestablish "rights" by appealing to a higher authority, for example, a better future society, you are now in the position to begin the struggle to make your life your own. At this level of total hostility to the existing social order, we can meet in true solidarity based on mutuality and complicity, uniting our efforts to overturn this society.

Ultimately, any form of solidarity that rests on an economic/political basis—on the basis of debt, rights and obligations, sacrifice and service—cannot be considered solidarity in an anarchist sense. From the economic/political perspective, "freedom" is a quantitative term merely referring to relatively lower levels of restriction. This view is summed up in the statement: "Your freedom ends where mine begins." This is the "freedom" of borders and limits, of contraction and suspicion—the "freedom" of sacred property. It makes each of us the prison warden of the other—a very sorry basis for solidarity.

But as I see it, the anarchist conception of freedom is

something qualitatively different from restriction. It is our capacity as individuals to create our lives on our own terms in free association with others of our choosing. When we conceive of freedom in this way, there is the potential for us to encounter each other in such a way that the freedom of each of us expands when it meets the freedom of the other. This is the basis of mutuality; our coming together enhances each of us. But in the world as it currently exists, there are many with whom a relationship of mutuality is not possible. Those who hold social and political power, those who hold wealth as their sacred property, those whose social task is to maintain the order of domination and all those who passively put up with this order act to restrict my freedom, to suppress my capacity to create my life on my own terms and to freely associate with others to achieve this aim. The masters of this world and their guard dogs impose their terms upon my life, forcing predetermined associations upon me. The only possible relationship I can have with them and the social order they uphold is that of enmity, of complete hostility. I discover the basis for mutuality precisely in those others who are enemies of the rulers of this world and their lackeys, those who strive to take back their lives and live them on their own terms. And this is where mutuality—the recognition that one's freedom can expand where it meets the other's freedom—becomes complicity. Complicity is the uniting of efforts in order to expand the capacity for individual self-determination against the world of domination. It is the active recognition that the rebellion of specific others expands one's freedom and, thus, it finds ways to act together with these others against the forces of domination and social control. It is not necessary to know these others personally. They may be carrying on their struggle half a globe away. It is only necessary to recognize our own struggle in their struggle and to take appropriate action where we are. Not out of charity or a sense of duty, but for ourselves.

DECIDING FOR ONESELF:
Democracy, consensus, unanimity and anarchist practice

One of the distinguishing principles of anarchist practice is that if we are to achieve our aims, they must already exist in the methods we use to attain them. The most basic aim of all anarchist revolutionary activity is the destruction of every structure of authority, every hierarchy, domination in all its forms. But to understand what this means in the immediate practice of struggle, it is necessary to have some idea of what this means beyond the negations. I am not speaking here about utopian blueprints or political (or even anti-political) programs, but rather about of how we can relate to each other in a way that is truly free of hierarchy and domination in our projects aimed at the destruction of this society and the creation of different ways of living and being together. It is important to keep in mind that the anarchist project is not to be a political program among political programs, another ideology in the marketplace of opinion (and thus, the eternal loser it is bound to be in that arena), but rather to develop a practice of social subversion here and now that is in perpetual conflict with the social order that surrounds us.

The absence of any sort of domination, of any sort of hierarchy, of any imposed order would manifest in practice as the practical capacity for every individual to decide for herself how she is going to live his life and to freely choose with whom he is going to share it and how. This is the meaning of self-organization—that most fundamental of anarchist principles. If instead we were to interpret the self that is organizing as a collective entity, then we would have to recognize that every

state, every corporation, every institution is technically "self-organized". Self-organization in the anarchist sense starts from individual self-determination and develops itself from there.

The application of this idea to our practice of revolt has significant implications in terms of the way we organize our projects and decide how to carry them out. Perhaps the first principle to be drawn from this is that organization in itself has no value. The value of organization lies in the use that each of us can make of it in carrying out the tasks necessary for creating her life and struggles in solidarity with others. Thus, the point is not to create massive organizations that seek members and that represent a particular perspective (anarchist, anarcho-communist, revolutionary or whatever label is chosen for the group), but rather to bring together the time, the space, the tools and the accomplices for carrying out the projects and activities we desire, the projects that can combine to form that "collective movement of individual realization" that is revolution in its fullest sense.

Unfortunately, many anarchists—even some who may claim to reject formal organization—organize their projects on a collectivist model. The desire to carry out a project together and the need to organize that project is transformed into the creation of a collective entity that represents that project. This collective entity and the project it represents come to have priority over the individuals who first had the desire to do the project. The contradiction between this model and the anarchist principle of self-organization as described above becomes most evident in the way decisions are made in these collectives. As soon as a collective entity formalizes, it becomes necessary for decisions to be made as a collective, and this requires a decision-making process. Thus, in joining the collective, the individual must sacrifice her capacity to decide for himself to the need of the collective for a decision-making process that is incumbent on all. The two processes most commonly used in collectives

formed by anarchists are direct democracy (majority decision) and consensus.

Consensus has been described quite well as a method for obtaining people's support without allowing them to express themselves autonomously. Starting from the idea that the needs of the collective take priority over the individuals involved, it seeks a decision that no one in the group will actively oppose, and once such a decision is reached (usually through hours and hours of tedious discussion that, as likely as not, merely wears down some of those in the group), everyone is expected to abide by it. Achieving consensus among any more than a few people is necessarily a matter of finding the lowest common denominator between all involved and accepting this lowest common denominator as the highest level of action. Thus, if we are talking specifically of anarchist revolutionary projects, the consensus process operates by lowering the level of critique that can be actively expressed. It is easy to get people to accept and rally around superficial critiques, but deep, radical critiques —and the kind of activity they call for—tend to frighten people and cause division. Thus, consensus best corresponds to a gradualist, piece-meal approach, to a reformist approach that does not require one to be able to act on one's own and to make decisions quickly in the moment of action.

One of the critiques some anarchists have made of the consensus process—a critique that is correct as far as it goes —is that if complete consensus were always required in order to act, nothing would ever get done, because it requires only one person to block it. But if those who make this critique don't also reject the collectivist model, then they have to turn to another decision-making process, that of direct democracy, i.e., majority rule. From an anarchist perspective, the problem with this should be obvious. We are opposed to all rule, that of the majority as well as that of a minority. Even when it is the desires of the majority that prevail over the rest, even if that

majority comprises 99% of those involved, if this decision is mandatory over those who do not agree, it is an imposition, a form of rule.

The real problem with the processes of consensus and direct democracy is that they are based on the assumption that the collective will, however it is determined, is to prevail over the will of the individual. But this has always been the basis of every form of rule, of every institution of authority. It is an act of self-deception to think that one has eradicated domination and hierarchy simply because one has eliminated its human face. The most insidious forms of domination are precisely those invisible concepts that stand above us and determine our existence—invisible concepts such as the collective will, the group consensus, the majority. These create the faceless domination, the disembodied hierarchy, in which the group rules over the individual. The rejection of all rule in our practice, thus requires the rejection of the collectivist model and all that it imposes. In other words, it must start from my choice neither to be ruled nor to rule, and to create my life against every form of rule to the extent that I am able to do so.

Thus, each of us decides for ourselves what she will do and does this with those who agree with him on what to do and how to do it. In this way, those who act together do so in full unanimity, and the project is not tainted by reservations or resignation to a decision that was not one's own. In practice, this inevitably means that we will come together in small, temporary groups based on affinity. These groups will be fluid, constantly changing, coming together and breaking apart. Those who value large-scale unity, a single front to present to the world, will look upon this as a lack of organization, a weakness preventing "us" from having a continuous influence over time, from presenting a "real alternative" to people in struggle. But behind this critique lies the political program, the preordained schema of how to go about overturning this world, that can

only seek followers, not accomplices.

Acting in small, temporary groups in which the desires and the will of each individual is fully realized because the group itself forms out of the coming together of the individual wills is a completely different way of conceiving revolutionary transformation. The point is no longer to bring together the masses to storm the Winter Palace, but rather to act immediately against the forces of domination we confront in our daily lives and to organize this activity in a way that expresses our refusal to be ruled, to submit to any form of higher authority. By not submitting ourselves to any sort of collective will in the way we carry on our struggle, we subvert those tendencies toward centralization, representation and hierarchy that exist even among anarchists, and remain free to act even when the various so-called revolutionary groups say to wait, to submit to the times. This is how we express our aim to destroy all domination in the methods by which we go about our struggle. Each of us starts from himself and finds her accomplices through the immediate practice of struggle in her life here and now.

"EVERYTHING MUST GO!"
Some Thoughts On Making a Total Critique

"Think of another concept of strength. Perhaps this is the new poetry. Basically, what is social revolt if not a generalized game of illegal matching and divorcing of things."
—At Daggers Drawn

The various institutions of the state and the economy are spreading their net into every corner of the globe and every moment of our existence. From the surveillance camera on the

street corner to the genetically engineered soy product, from the strip mine in the West Papua jungle to the increasingly broad and far-reaching "anti-terrorist" laws, the world is becoming an interwoven network of control and exploitation coupled to an unending parade of environmental and social catastrophes that are used to justify the increase in control. For those of us who imagine and desire a world in which we, as individuals, truly determines our own existence, together with those we enjoy sharing our lives with, it is necessary to develop a critique of this world that goes to the roots of all this, a total critique of the existence that has been imposed on us.

This is by no means an easy task. We have been taught to simply accept things as they are, and when we start to question, it is much easier to examine things piece-meal, not trying to make connections or keeping those connections on a surface level. This is easier on a number of levels. It not only does not require one to think as deeply or examine reality as closely. It also makes for a critique that is much more easily actively expressed without disturbing one's own calm existence too greatly. If we view the killing of an unarmed person by a cop, the war against Iraq, the clear-cutting of a forest, the sweatshop in Taiwan and the emptiness of our daily lives as separate matters, we can easily conceive of them as mere aberrations. Our task then simply becomes that of pointing out the problem to the right authorities, so that they can correct the problem. Voting, petitions, litigation, appeals for legislation and public non-violent demonstrations before the symbols of the institutions responsible for taking care of these matters become the order of the day. The aim is simply to make the institutions live up to their own proclaimed ideals. But in the present reality, this reformist perspective either requires one to put on blinders so as to only see one's own narrow issues, or to continually scurry from one isolated problem to the next, on and on in the activist rat race until one burns oneself out.

So it is clearly necessary to go deeper, to make the connections between the various miseries and disasters that we face. It is necessary for us to learn to make the "illegal matches" that we have been trained to ignore, the connections that allow us to begin to understand the totality of our existence. This is not as simple as making blanket declarations that all of this is caused by the state, by capital, by civilization. As true as this may be, all that we have done if we do this is given a label to this totality, and labeling a thing is not the same as understanding it adequately to be able to confront and challenge it. In fact, without an adequate analysis of the nature of the state, capital or civilization, they merely function as abstractions that can distract us from the actual realities we face and may even end up become one's role within the activist milieu, the basis for a political identity that is placed in contention with others in the ideological marketplace. This is itself enough to indicate that such critiques are not yet total.

If one has not overcome the method of critique that this society imposes, the piecemeal critique of the parts without any conception of the whole, one's attempts to critique the totality of our existence may take the form of quantitatively adding together a series of oppressions and/or institutions to be opposed. A prime example of this is to be found in the statements of purpose of groups such as Love and Rage, which may inform us that they oppose sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, capitalism and the state. And those who want to be more radical may add ageism, ablism, speciesism, civilization and so on. But this still is a more like a laundry list than a serious critique, a list of issues to deal with in a political framework. Deeper connections—connections that show how the ruling order can recuperate partial oppositions (anti-racism, feminism, gay liberation, even those forms of opposition to capitalism, the state and civilization that continue to operate within a political activist framework) to its own ends—can only spring from a different kind of critique.

Even when a critique places the various oppressions under a single conceptual umbrella (e.g., the state, capital, patriarchy, civilization) in order to explain them, this critique is not necessarily a total critique. Such critiques may in fact be broad without having depth. When such critiques are partial this will become evident first of all in the inability to apply the critique concretely to one's daily struggle against this social order. This indicates that although the critique may indeed appear to have made the necessary connections, the "illegal matches", on the surface level, this has happened in such a realm of abstraction that it does not allow for the "illegal divorces"— the singling out of specific targets, the recognition of the physical body of the enemy—to occur.

One of the primary reasons for this is a failure to recognize and reject reification. Reification is the ideological and social process of transforming an activity or social relationship—something we do—into a being that stands above us and acts upon us as if we were mere tools. An example of what I mean can be drawn from a particular critique that has developed in certain anti-civilization circles. (I choose this example because it so clearly expresses this failure and because my own perspective also includes a critique of civilization, thus this is part of a comradely critical discourse.) In recent writings, certain individuals in anti-civilization circles have made a critique of reason that is actually an ideological rejection of reason. Of course, their argument against reason is always reasoned (even if often poorly so). However, the fact that this critique may not be able to be fully realized in practice now (which anti-capitalist lives absolutely without money? which critic of technology lives without any products of the industrial system?) is not sufficient reason to discount it. Where the problem lies is that if this critique cannot be applied usefully precisely in the way we develop theory and critique, i.e., in the way we think (and there is no evidence that it can), then

it has no practical application to our revolutionary struggle. The failure of this critique as revolutionary theory stems from the fact that it accepts the concept of reason as a thing in itself. In other words, it accepts the rationalist reification of reason and bases its rejection of reason upon this. So this critique is really a mere philosophical game, a game of words that allows the players to claim that their critique of this society is more total simply because it is broader than that of others. But a total critique requires depth; it needs to get to the bottom of things, to the roots. And at bottom reason is not a thing in itself. It is an activity we do, but one that has been reified in the form of rationalism into an ideal above us precisely because it was socially useful. But the absolute rejection reason is also a reified concept, an ideal that stands above us, since even on the level of antagonistic struggle it can only exist as a goal for a distant future. The rejection of reified reason would start with the recognition that Reason, as a thing above us, does not exist. Rather each of us reasons, and has his own reasons, and certain tools for critical thinking can help us hone our capacity to reason into a weapon we can use in our lives and struggles.

In fact, a total critique is qualitatively different from a partial critique. All partial critiques, regardless of how extreme they may be, start from the perspective of this society. (For instance, the critique of reason described above starts from the social conception of Reason as defined by rationalism). The more extreme and broader partial critiques simply lead to an ideological rejection of major aspects of this society or even of all of it considered abstractly because this society is deemed to have failed on its own terms. Such ideological rejections offer little of practical use to the immediate struggle against this society since they are based on the same reifications through which this society seeks to justify itself. In developing a total critique, one starts from herself, from

her desire to determine his existence on his own terms. This critique is thus the act—or better, the ongoing practice—of confronting this society with oneself and one's hostility to its intrusion into one's existence. It is from this basis that one can indeed plumb the depths of this society and begin to recognize the intertwining networks of control through which it defines every moment of our existence. This is also the practical basis from which to make those "illegal matches and divorces"—the capacity to put together and break apart in order to know how and why, when and where to attack. Since one makes this critique starting from herself and her desire, it is not merely a critique of the failures of this society, of what is worst in it; it is also a critique of its success, of what is best in it, because even if this society were to live up to all of its ideals, it would still demand the subjection of our individuality, of our uniqueness to it, "to the common good". Furthermore, because it is an active critique, the intertwined theory and practice of our enmity against this social order, it is never a finished critique. Rather it is in continual development, honing itself as we struggles against the reality of our current existence. When one starts from himself in developing his critique of the social order, she recognizes this order as an enemy to be destroyed and seeks the weapons she and the accomplices with whom he can attack this order. And from here solidarity and revolutionary practice can develop.

ON THE MYSTICAL BASIS OF THE "NEUTRALITY" OF TECHNOLOGY

…the production of robots is naturally (or rather unnaturally) accompanied by the development of an environment suitable only for robots.

—***Encyclopédia des Nuisances***

There is an assumption popular among leftists and other radicals who still feel some attachment to the concept of progress or even just to Marxian theoretical constructions that technology, as such, is neutral. The assumption is particularly amusing because those who hold it will accuse the critics of technology of having a mystical and ahistorical conception. What these apologists for technology claim is that the critics of technology promote "technological determinism", making technology the central determining factor in social development, and thus losing sight of the social factors. They end up by proclaiming that the problems do not lie in the technological systems as such but in who manages them and in how they choose to utilize them.

Doubtless, there have been those who have attributed essential determining powers to technology. One of the greatest proponents of this view was Marx, whose economism was decidedly a technological economism. In his perspective, economic necessity created technological developments (such as the early industrial factory) that then created the basis for the inevitable supersession of the dominant economic system. Thus, Marx's economic determinism incorporated a kind of technological determinism as well.

Marx's fault lies precisely in his determinism (an unavoidable

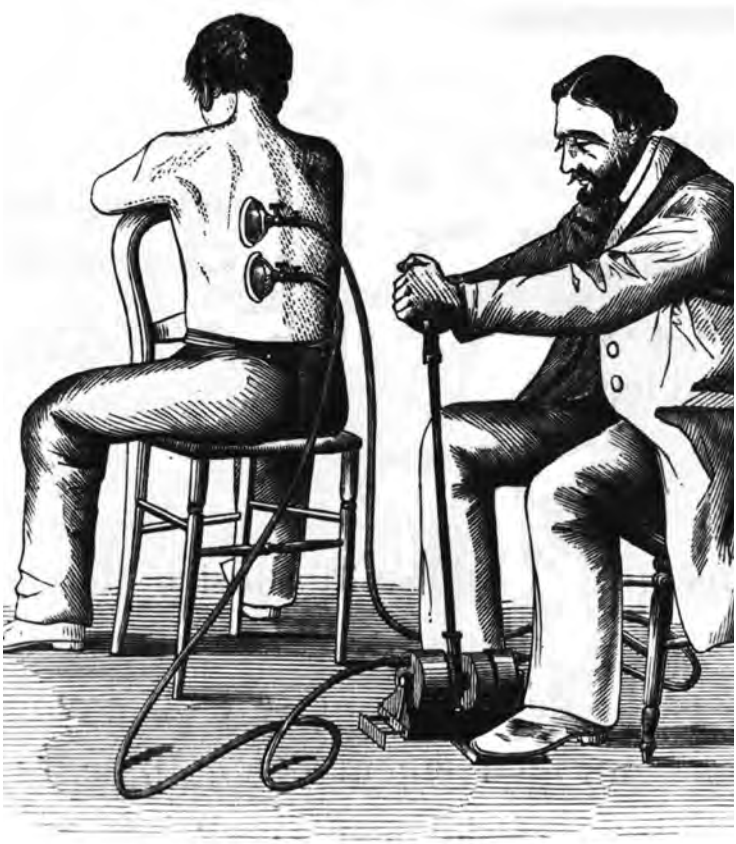
consequence of the fact that his critique of Hegel was limited to turning Hegel—a historical determinist—"right side up" rather than rejecting his fundamental constructs). A truly historical, as opposed to a mystical, approach to social struggle and all the factors involved in it has to reject any form of determinism, because it begins from the idea of history as human activity rather than as an expression of any overarching metaphysical value or conception. Thus, any product of history has to be viewed as a product of its context in terms of the concrete social relationships in which it developed. From such a perspective, there can be no such thing as a "neutral" technology.

Technology always develops within a social context with the explicit aim of reproducing that context. Its form, its purpose and its possibilities are determined by that context, and this is precisely why no technology is neutral. If we understand technology as large-scale systems of techniques (such as industrialism, cybernetics, etc.), then we do not know of any technological system that was not developed within the context of domination, class rule and exploitation. If Marx, in his myopic Hegelian vision, could somehow see communism in the industrial system, it is only because his vision of communism was the negation of individual freedom, the absorption of the individual into the "species being" that was manifested in the compulsory collective productive process of the factory. In fact, the industrial system was developed for one purpose – to maximize the amount of profit that could be gotten from each moment of labor by increasing the level of control over each and every movement of the worker on the job. Each new technological development within the industrial capitalist system simply increased the level of control over the processes to the point where now they are mostly automated and nanotechnology and biotechnology are creating the basis for bringing this control directly into our bodies on a molecular level.

Just as the ideologies of any epoch are the expression of

the ruling system of that epoch, so the technologies of any epoch also reflect the ruling systems. The conception that technologies are neutral, that we could simply reappropriate the technological systems and use them for our ends, is a mystical conception granting an ahistorical innocence to technology. Like ideology, those systems of reified ideas through which the ruling order enforces its domination, technology is a product of the ruling order, created to reinforce its rule. The destruction of the ruling order will involve the destruction of its technology, of the system of techniques it developed to enforce its rule.

At this point the technological systems developed by the ruling order are so intrusive and so harmful that to even pretend that they could be used for any liberatory purpose is absurd. If Marx, following Hegel, wanted history to have a final, determined end, we now know such a view is far too Christian to ever be truly revolutionary. Revolution is a wager, and that wager is precisely that the unknown, which offers the possibility of the end of domination and exploitation, is worth risking, and that taking this risk involves the destruction of the totality of this civilization of domination and exploitation – including its technological systems – that has been all we have ever known. Life is elsewhere. Do we have the courage and the will to find it?



Different Aims, Different Methods:
On the incompatibility of reform and revolution

Reformist consciousness is always expressed in the form of justification.
Contrarily, the behavior of the rebels seemed unjustifiable.
—Yves Delhoysie

I have always contended that reform and revolution are incompatible. But the full significance of this statement requires a deep examination of what one means by these terms. First of all, in order to be clear from the beginning, when I speak of revolution I mean social revolution, i.e., the overturning of all social relationships. But here the fundamental question of the relationship of reform to revolution remains.

Within progressive ideology, reform and revolution are simply matters of degree. A revolutionary perspective is supposedly just more extreme than a reformist perspective but has the same aims, and could thus use reformist methods alongside its revolutionary methods. The extent to which even some of the most extreme anarchists buy into this perspective is made evident by the extent to which they address so much of their communication to activists, progressives and reformists, seeking acceptance of their own practice within these circle, and the extent to which they will find justifications for a variety of reformist practices they carry out, from litigation on various issues to allowing themselves to be represented in the mass media.

Yet it should be quite clear that social revolution as described above has nothing to do with progress. I believe it was Apollinaire who said "…the new does exist apart from the consideration of progress. It is implied in surprise."

And in this statement we can see the basic difference between reform and revolution. Reform has as its basis the continuation of the present order and simply seeks to make progress toward lessening its misery or rather the extent to which we feel it. Social revolution, on the other hand, is as destructive as it is creative, seeking to completely overturn current social relationships in order to make way for the creation of something new, something utterly unlike what existed before. Revolution stems from the recognition that our present existence does not offer us anything that can really make up for the impoverishment that it imposes on us and that it is thus in our best interest to stake our lives on destroying this society and leaping into the unknown.

So a social revolutionary position is not simply a more extreme position on the same spectrum on which reform lies. It is something absolutely other than reform, something as opposed to reform as it is to reaction, conservatism or any other part of the political spectrum. The revolutionary critique is thus not essentially extreme, but rather radical. In other words, it goes to the roots; it asks the fundamental questions, and in doing so comes to recognize that what appear to be separate problems and issues of this society are in fact deeply connected, and that the real problem is this society itself. And this cannot be reformed away.

Since social revolution is something absolutely other than reform in its aims and in its critique, it must also be absolutely other in its methodology of practice. Reformists have accused revolutionary anarchists of being "negative" for as long as there have been revolutionary anarchists. Bakunin's calls for destruction and praise of the "wicked passions" of insurgent populations even frightened those revolutionaries who desired a more orderly insurgence, one they could control. The reformists and the proponents of orderly revolution are not wrong in their assessment of a truly revolutionary anarchist

perspective. It is utterly negative in relation to this society, rejecting its most fundamental categories. And even that which is creative in the anarchist perspective—individual freedom, autonomy, self-organization—is a negation of all authority, all hierarchy, all representation, all delegation of responsibility.

The methodology of anarchist practice aimed toward social revolution stems from a few basic principles. The first is direct action in its original and most basic meaning: acting directly to accomplish whatever task one wishes to accomplish, from the publication of a flyer to the destruction of some aspect or instrument of the system of domination and exploitation. Implied in this is the necessity of the autonomy of struggle. This means the rejection of all organizations or structures such as parties, unions or formal federations that seek to represent the struggle. In addition it means the rejection of every ideology and every role, because these too, in their own way, become representatives of struggle, defining its contours and limits. Direct action and autonomy cannot function in any practice involving dialogue with the rulers of this society, in any context of compromise or negotiation with the enemy. Thus, to maintain autonomous direct action in practice requires that we remain in permanent conflict with the ruling order as we go about our struggle, and that we express this in active ongoing attack against every facet of that order as we encounter it in our daily lives. Behind these basic principles of practice is the most basic principle – that if we, as anarchists and revolutionaries, are ever to have any chance of accomplishing our aims, our ends must exist already in our means.

What is perhaps most interesting though about the methodology of autonomous direct action attacking the institutions that comprise this order and refusing to back down or negotiate is that it is a methodology that can be used in intermediate struggles as well. Any careful look at the history of uprisings and revolutions will show that no uprising

began with a fully worked out total critique of the social order. Rather they were born in frustration over specific conditions combining with a loss of faith in the capacity of the ruling order to deal with those conditions. Often in these situations, people will organize themselves in order to deal with the specific struggle at hand, and in the process put into practice a methodology very much like that described. Thus, there is no reason why anarchists should not pursue the application of these methods to specific struggles where they are at, in this way practically undermining the methodologies of reform that so frequently recuperate the anger of people over the conditions of their daily existence.

But the very basic principle, that the end must exist already in the means used to achieve it has further implications. Even in the most revolutionary anarchist circles, reformism raises its head in relation to specific forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, hetero-sexism and the like, though in a mostly negative form as rejection of the implications of a fully revolutionary anarchist perspective. As I said earlier, social revolution is the complete overturning of existing social relationships. Just as in the struggle against domination and exploitation, it is necessary to reject all hierarchical, authoritarian and representative relationships, so in the struggles against racism, sexism, hetero-sexism and the like, it is necessary to reject the social constructs of race, gender, sexual identity, along with every form of nationalism. I understand that these categories and identities can be useful for improving one's conditions within this society. But this is precisely why clinging to these identities is a reformist practice. What many people fear in the revolutionary rejection of these categories is that this rejection will lead to the refusal to recognize the reality of racism, sexism, etc. But just as a revolutionary rejection of hierarchy, authority and delegation is a practical confrontation with these

social relationships aimed at their destruction, so also the rejection of race, gender, sexual preference, etc., as categories is a practical confrontation aimed at the destruction of these social constructions. It is thus not an attempt to run away from the very real problems of racism, sexism, hetero-sexism, ethno-centrism and so on, but rather to confront them in a revolutionary manner—a manner aimed at the destruction of this entire social order and the overturning of all social relationships—rather than in a reformist manner that seeks to guarantee every social category its rights.

Ultimately, an anarchist social revolutionary perspective is completely incompatible with a reformist perspective, because it is born from revolt. Reform assumes that the present social order can be improved and brought to the point of accommodating the needs of all by recognizing their rights. Revolt is born when recognizes that this society can never recognize them on that most basic level, as a concrete (as opposed to abstract) individual. It is thus a total rejection of this society, its methods, its roles and its rules. The reformist seeks to justify the existence of each category (and these categories are already socially defined) within society. Revolt cannot be justified within the terminology or categories of this society, because revolt is an act of hostility against this society and all of its categories. And revolution is the conscious extension of this hostility with the aim of completely destroying the present society in order to open the way for something completely new. It has nothing to do with reform, because it is not a question of progress, but of surprise, of launching into the unknown of freedom.

ON SEXUAL POVERTY

A society based upon concentrated power and economic exchange impoverishes every area of life, even those that are most intimate. We hear a great deal of talk about women's liberation, gay liberation and even sexual liberation within anarchist circles. And analyses of male domination, patriarchy and hetero-sexism are not so hard to find, the reality of sexual impoverishment seems to be largely ignored, questions of sexual expression being largely limited to those surrounding monogamy, non-monogamy, polyamory and other such issues of the mechanics of loving relationships. This limitation is itself, in my opinion, a reflection of our sexual impoverishment —let's limit ourselves to speaking of such relational mechanics so that we can avoid the question of the quality of these relationships.

There are several factors that play into the sexual impoverishment we experience in this society. If we look into its origins, of course, the institutions of marriage and the family and the imposition of patriarchal social structures are significant, and their role cannot be ignored. But in the present at least here in the so-called West, the strength of these institutions has greatly diminished over the past several decades. Yet sexual impoverishment has not. If anything, it has become more intense and desperately felt.

The same process that has led to the weakening and gradual disintegration of the family is what now upholds sexual impoverishment: the process of commodification. The commodification of sexuality is, of course, as old as prostitution (and so nearly as old as civilization), but in the past five decades, advertising and the media have commodified the conception of sexuality. Advertisements offer us charismatic sexiness, bound to lead to spontaneous passion in deodorant sticks, toothpaste dispensers, perfume bottles and cars. Movies and

TV shows sell us images of the ease with which one can get beautiful people into one's bed. Of course, if one is gorgeous and charismatic oneself—and so the deodorants, perfumes, gyms, diets and hair gels sell. We are taught to desire plastic images of "beauty" that are unattainable because they are largely fictitious. This creation of unattainable, artificial desires serves the needs of capital perfectly, because it guarantees an ongoing subconscious dissatisfaction that can be played on to keep people buying in the desperate attempt to ease their longing.

The commodification of sexuality has led to a kind of "liberation" within the schema of market relationships. Not only does one frequently see sexual relations between unmarried people on the big screen, but increasingly homosexuality, bisexuality and even a bit of kinkiness are achieving some level of acceptability in society. Of course, in a way that suits with the needs of the market. In fact, these practices are transformed into identities to which one more or less strictly conforms. Thus, they come to require much more than the practice of a particular sexual act. An entire "lifestyle" comes to be associated with them, involving conformity, predictability, specific places to go, specific products to buy. In this way, gay, lesbian, bi, leather, s/m and b/d subcultures develop which function as target markets outside of traditional family and generational contexts.

In fact, the commodification of sexuality places all forms of sexual practice in a context of products for sale at a price. In the sexual marketplace, everyone is trying to sell himself to the highest bidder while trying to purchase those who attract her at the lowest price. Thus, the association of sexuality with conquest, competition, struggles for power. Thus, the absurd games of playing hard to get or of trying to pressure the other into having sex. And thus, the possessiveness that so often develops in ongoing "love" relationships—after all, in the

market regime, doesn't one own what one has purchased?

In this context, the sexual act itself tends to take on a more measured, quantifiable form in keeping with this commodification. Within a capitalist society it should be no surprise that the "liberation" of sexual frankness would predominantly mean an increasing discussion of the mechanics of sex. The joy of the sexual act is reduced not just to physical pleasure, but more specifically to the orgasm, and sexual discourse centers around the mechanics for most effectively achieving orgasm. I do not want to be misunderstood. An ecstatic orgasm is a marvelous thing. But centering a sexual encounter around achieving an orgasm leads one to lose touch with the joy of being lost in the other here and now. Rather than being an immersion into each other, sex centered around achieving orgasm becomes a task aimed at a future goal, a manipulation of certain mechanisms to achieve an end. As I see it, this transforms all sex into basically masturbatory activity—two people using each other to achieve a desired end, exchanging (in the most economic sense) pleasure without giving anything of oneself. In such calculated interactions, there is no place for spontaneity, passion beyond measure, or abandoning oneself in the other.

This is the social context of sexuality in which we currently live. Within this context there are several other factors that further reinforce the impoverishment of sexuality. Capitalism needs partial liberation movements of all sorts both to recuperate revolt and to spread the stultifying rule of the market into more and more aspects of life. Thus, capitalism needs feminism, racial and national liberation movements, gay liberation and, yes, sexual liberation. But capitalism never immediately sheds the old ways of domination and exploitation, and not just because it is a slow and cumbersome system. Partial liberation struggles retain their recuperative use precisely by continuing to have the old oppressions as a counterpart to prevent those

involved in the liberation struggles from seeing the poverty of their "liberation" within the present social order. Thus, if puritanism and sexual oppression were truly eradicated within capitalism, the poverty of the supposedly more feminist conscious sex shops would be obvious.

And so puritanism continues and not just as an out-dated holdover from earlier times. This is manifested in the obvious ways, such as the continued pressure to get married (or at least establish an identity as a couple) and have a family. But it manifests in ways most people would not notice, because they have never considered other possibilities. Adolescence is the time when sexual urges are strongest due to the changes in the body that are taking place. In a healthy society, it seems to me that adolescents would have every opportunity to explore their desires without fear or censure, but rather with openness and advice, if they want it, from adults. While the intense sexual desires of adolescents are clearly recognized (how much TV and movie humor is based on the intensity of this desire and the near impossibility of exploring it in a free and open way?) in this society, rather than creating means for these desires to be explored freely, this society censures them, calling for abstinence, leaving them to either ignore their desires, limit themselves to masturbating or accept often hurried sex in high pressure situations and uncomfortable environments in order to avoid detection. It's hard not to wonder how any sort of healthy sexuality could develop from this.

Because the only sort of sexual "liberation" of use to capitalism is one that continues to rest in sexual scarcity, every tool for maintaining sexual repression in the midst of the fictitious liberation is used. Since the old religious justifications for sexual repression no longer hold much water for large portions of the populace, a material fear of sex now acts as a catalyst for a repressive sexual environment. This fear is promoted mainly on two fronts. First of all there is the fear of the sexual

predator. Child molestation, sexual stalking and rape are very real occurrences. But the media exaggerates the reality with lurid accounts, exaggeration and speculation. The handling these matters by the authorities and the media are clearly not aimed at dealing with the very real problems, but at promoting a specific fear. In reality, the instances of non-sexual violence against children and women (and I am specifically referring to those acts of violence based on the fact that the victims are children or women) are many times more frequent than acts of sexual violence. But sex has been invested with a strong social value which gives acts of sexual violence a far more frightening image.* And the fear promoted in the media in relation to these acts helps to reinforce a general social attitude and needs to be repressed or at least publicly controlled. Secondly, there is the fear of STDs and particularly AIDS. In fact, by the early '80's the fear of STDs had largely ceased to function as a way of scaring people away from sex. Most STDs are fairly easily treated, and the more thoughtful people were already aware of the usefulness of condoms in preventing the spread of gonorrhea, syphilis and a number of other diseases. Then AIDS was discovered. There is a great deal that can be said about AIDS, many questions that can be raised, a whole lot of shady business (in the most literal sense of the term) relating to this phenomenon, but in relation to my present subject, it provided a basis for using the fear of STDs once again to promote sexual abstinence or, at least, less spontaneous, less abandoned, more sterile sexual encounters.

In the midst of such an utterly distorted sexual environment, another factor develops that seems almost inevitable. A

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* The extremely important matter of the ideology of childhood innocence—an ideology that only serves in keeping children in their place in this society—also relates to this. But that would require an article of its own just to begin to touch on the matter.

tendency grows to cling desperately to those with who we have made some connection no matter how impoverished. The fear of being alone, without a lover, leads one to cling to a "lover" whom one has long since ceased to really love. Even when sex continues within such a relationship, it is likely to be purely mechanical and ritualistic, certainly not a moment of abandon in the other.

And of course, there are those who simply feel that they cannot maneuver through this sad, impoverished climate, this destitute environment of artificial and fear-ridden relationships, and so do not even try. It is not a lack of desire that compels their "abstinence", but an unwillingness to sell themselves and a despair at the possibility of real loving sexual encounters. Often these are individuals who have, in the past, put themselves on the line in the search for intense, passionate erotic encounters and have found themselves rejected as a lesser commodity. They were wagering themselves, the others were buying and selling. And they have lost the will to keep wagering themselves.

In any case, we are, indeed, living in a society that impoverishes all it touches, and thus the sexual as well. Sexual liberation—in the real sense, that is our liberation to explore the fullness of physical erotic abandon in another (or others)—can never be fully realized within this society, because this society requires impoverished, commodified sexual encounters, just as it requires all interactions to be commodified, measured, calculated. So free sexual encounters, like every free encounter, can only exist against this society. But this is not a cause for despair (despair, after all, is only the reverse side of hope), but rather for subversive exploration. The realms of love are vast, and there are infinite paths to explore. The tendency among anarchists (at least in the US) to reduce questions of sexual liberation to the mechanics of relations (monogamy, non-monogamy, poly-

amory, "promiscuity", etc) needs to be gone beyond. Free sexual expression has room for all of this and more. In fact, sexual richness has nothing to do with either mechanics (either of relationships or orgasms) or quantity (capitalism has long since proven that more and more effective crap still stinks like shit). Rather it lies in the recognition that sexual satisfaction is not just a question of pleasure as such, but specifically of that pleasure that springs from real encounter and recognition, the union of desires and bodies, and the harmony, pleasure and ecstasy that comes from this. In this light, it is clear that we need to pursue our sexual encounters as we do all of our relationships, in total opposition to this society, not out of any sense of revolutionary duty, but because it is the only way possible to have full, rich, uninhibited sexual relations in which love ceases to be a desperate mutual dependence and instead becomes and expansive exploration of the unknown.

WAITING FOR THE APOCALYPSE:
The Ideology of Collapse and the Avoidance of Revolutionary Responsibility

If the question is not that of how to **make** *revolution,*
it becomes that of **how** *to avoid it.*

There can be little doubt that we are living in frightening times, times in which it is easier for those who can to simply bury their heads in the sand and go on as if everything is fine. Environmental degradation, social disintegration, increasing impoverishment in every area of life—the entire array of the consequences of a social order that is monstrously out of balance—can easily lead those who think about it to believe

that an end of some sort is on the horizon. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that apocalyptic perspectives have arisen on many sides and are certainly no longer limited to religious fanatics. One of the versions of this apocalyptic ideology is that which foresees the collapse of civilization within the next few decades, brought on ecological, social and/or economic breakdown. It is this particular form of apocalyptic thought that I want to deal with here, because it is in this form that one most often encounters it in anarchist circles.

Those who hold to any apocalyptic view may view the coming end with either hope or with despair, and this is true of the ideology of collapse as well. Some of the anarcho-primitivists who adhere to this belief look at the collapse as a great opportunity for reinventing primitive ways of living free of the institutions of civilization. A few even seem to take delight in the suffering and death that would inevitably accompany such a collapse, apparently forgetting that this suffering and death would not be likely to recognize distinctions between rulers and ruled, between domesticated and wild, between civilized and "primitive". Furthermore, they seem to ignore the fact that those who have controlled power and resources up to now would certainly continue to try to do so as the world collapsed around them, most likely resorting to the same sort of techniques as warlords in Somalia or Afhganistan have used, but on a much larger scale with much more destructive weapons.

Some radical environmentalists seem to have a somewhat more realistic conception of what this collapse would mean. Recognizing that a collapse of civilization at his point would certainly be brought on to a large extent through a major ecological breakdown involving large-scale devastation of the fabric of life on earth, the apocalyptic vision tends to move them to despair, and thus to desperate action. The attempt to preserve the fabric of life as civilization goes down becomes

the primary motive of their activity. It must be preserved at any cost—even that of our principles, even that of our dreams…

But the problem with apocalyptic thinking is that it is always an act of faith. It assumes the inevitability of the impending end, and makes its decisions on the basis of this belief. In making a prediction about the future the basis for action rather than the present reality one confronts and one's own desires about how one wants to live, it gives the struggle against this world an ideological basis. Of course, such a basis has one advantage, it makes it much easier to make decisions regarding how to go about one's struggle, because this ideological limiting of possibilities to one to some extent already makes these decisions for us. But this deserves a little more examination.

Placing one's faith in an inevitable future, whether positive or negative, makes it very easy to make some sort of accommodation with the present. If Marx's belief in the inevitability of communism led him to justify industrialism and capitalist exploitation as necessary steps on the road to this end, the ideology of inevitable collapse ends up justifying a defensive practice in response to the devastations caused by the ruling order on the one hand, and an escapist practice which involves largely ignoring the reality we face on the other.

The defensive practice that develops from this perspective springs from the recognition that if the trajectory of industrial civilization is left unchecked it's collapse would probably lead to such environmental devastation that life itself would be threatened. So the sort of action to be pursued is that which will protect the few remaining wild places and non-civilized people that currently exist and to limit the damages that the operation of the industrial/post-industrial technological systems can cause in order to lessen the devastation of the collapse. Such a logic of defense

tends to push toward a reformist practice involving litigation, negotiation with the masters of this world, proposals for legislation and the acceptance of representation in the mass media in order to appeal to the masses. This tendency can be seen both in the radical environmental movement and in indigenist* movements. Of course the defensive nature of the struggles of indigenous people is quite understandable, considering that as cultures, they really are facing their end. Nonetheless, the tendency of defensive struggle to fall into reformism is very clearly manifested here as indigenous struggles so often fall into the demand for rights, official recognition, property (in the form of land rights) and the like. And for anarchists who claim to want a revolutionary break with the present, uncritical support for these struggles is itself a compromise, an embrace of what is merely the latest, most fashionable version of third-worldism.

The escapist tendency sees in the predicted collapse liberation from civilization. Since this collapse is inevitable, there is no need to take specific action against the institutions of domination and exploitation that form this civilization; there is no need to strive for a break with the present world, for insurrection and revolution. In stead one can simply go off into the wilds and give oneself over to developing "primitive" skills in order to prepare oneself for the coming collapse and let the rest take care of itself. Of course, I support people learning any sort of skill that can enhance their capacities for self-determination and self-enjoyment. The problem with this perspective is not in choosing to learn the skills, but giving up a practice aimed toward the revolutionary destruction of the present social order based on a faith in its inevitable collapse.

It should go without saying: the apocalypse is a matter of faith, not a proven fact; the collapse of civilization is merely

* I say "indigenist" as opposed to "indigenous" because I am referring at least as much to the support movements of non-indigenous radicals as to the movements of indigenous people themselves.

a prediction, one possibility among many, not a certainty. What we are facing now is an ongoing train of disasters that impoverish and devastate our lives and the earth. Assuming the inevitability of collapse is an easy way out. It permits one not to face the present reality, not to place oneself in conflict with the existence we are living here and now. If one sees civilization as the enemy, as the source of all of our problems, by assuming its inevitable collapse in the near future, one relieves oneself of any responsibility for attacking it and attempting to create a revolutionary rupture to bring about its destruction while opening new possibilities for living—a responsibility that would require one to hone one's critique so as to know where, when, why and how to effectively attack it.

A belief in an inevitable collapse not only legitimates defensive reformism and survivalist escapism, it actually makes them the most logical practice. But since this collapse is not present reality, but a mere prediction—which is to say nothing, or at least nothing more than a thought in some people's heads—then we have to ask ourselves if we want to base our practice on this nothing, if we want place our wager on this.

If we recognize history as the activity of people in the world, rather than as the use of the past or the future to justify the present, then it becomes clear that every break with the present, every new beginning, transforms all time. Thus our struggle happens now, and it is a struggle against the present. It is, in fact, a game in which we place our lives on the line, putting ourselves at stake, and this is the essence of revolutionary responsibility—taking responsibility for one's life here and now in open conflict with this society. In this perspective, the potential for an economic, social or ecological collapse is part of the challenge we face, part of what we are staking ourselves against. But since it is our lives, our selves, that we are staking, the way we choose to face life—our desires, our passions, our principles, our personal ethic, all that makes

each of us unique—cannot simply be laid aside in order to "save the world" from a predicted collapse. (Nor can we simply hide from it.) The wager is precisely that we will overturn this social order that may be heading for collapse by living and fighting on against it on our own terms, refusing to compromise. The moment we turn to petition, negotiation, litigation, legislation or even mediation (i.e., accepting representation of ourselves in the mass media), we have already lost the bet, because we have ceased to act on our own terms, we have allowed a "higher" value, a moral valorization of Humanity, of Life or of the Earth, take precedence over our own lives, our own humanity that resides precisely in our individuality. It is precisely this moralism, based in an ideology of despair that leads us to sacrifice ourselves, our own dreams and our own principles, and thus transforms us from insurgents and revolutionaries into reformists, into voters, petitioners, litigators… pathetic beggars.

In speaking of revolutionary responsibility, I am speaking precisely of this willingness to place oneself on the line, to stake one's life on the possibility of a revolutionary rupture that we create. This perspective stands in absolute opposition to any form of apocalyptic faith including the ideology of collapse. It means that our practice of revolt starts from our own dream of the world we desire and our own understanding of how the present world stands in our way, an understanding that we sharpen through analysis and critique in order to better attack this world. Because if we start in this way, from ourselves and our most revolutionary desires, we will see the need to stretch out our hand, grasp every weapon that we can truly make our own and go to the attack against this civilization based on domination and exploitation. Because there is no guarantee that this monster will collapse on its own. Because even if it eventually does, in the meantime we would be living in mediocrity and misery. Because only by

learning to actively create our lives for ourselves, developing ways of living that are absolutely different from those that we have experienced up to now—something that can only be learned in revolt—will we be able to guarantee that the end of this civilization will not lead to even worse horrors. Because this is the meaning of taking responsibility for one's own life here and now, this is the meaning of revolutionary responsibility.

Against Renunciation

The revolt against civilization will be expansive or it will not be at all.

Despite nearly two centuries of theoretical and practical experience and several decades of critique specifically aimed against them, christianity and its pallid offspring, bourgeois morality, continue to rear their ugly heads in revolutionary anarchist circles. New ideologies continue to arise calling for self-sacrifice and renunciation. Whether they wrap themselves in the cloak of anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-speciesism, the refusal of privilege, radical environmentalism or any of the myriad of disguises available to them, these calls to limit oneself in the name of social transformation must be recognized as counter-revolutionary, because they are chains placed upon revolt.

Calls for self-limitation are always presented in the fine-sounding rhetoric of compassion or in the stronger language of obligation. In either case, it is the language of morality, and as revolutionaries, we need to recognize that the limits imposed by morality are always limits placed upon our capacity to fight against this society. This may be more fully understood if we

remember that the society in which we live—the society of domination and exploitation, of property and social control, of domestication and measurement—is based precisely upon limitation and its acceptance.

Power and property have gone hand in hand since the beginning of civilization and exist through the imposition of limits. The power to rule requires the existence of methods for controlling the activity of those ruled. These methods involve limiting the activity of others through varying combinations of coercion and manipulation. If one of the main reasons to establish one's rule is that of controlling property, property is equally on of the means of extorting compliance from those ruled. This is because property itself is perhaps the fundamental limitation. Property exists only through the exclusion of all except the so-called owner and the power (i.e., the state) that grants and enforces property rights from access to that which has been defined as "property". This exclusion, of course, depends on the capacity that exists for enforcing it. But to the extent to which it can be enforced, it is a limitation through which the rulers of this society are able to control those they rule.

And from these combined limitations of political power and property spring further limitations: work, domestication, technological systems, industrialism…Work is coerced activity. No one denies that it is necessary to carry out some sort of activity, to make exertions, in order to create our lives and weave them together in a way that pleases us, but this is not the some as work. Work is forced upon us when those things that we need to create our lives are made inaccessible to us by others—the owners or controllers of social wealth. In order to get back some of that which has been taken from us—usually in a form over which we have no control, we have to give over the greater part of our time to the projects of those who rule us, projects that have as their ultimate purpose the continuation

of the social relationships of power and exploitation.

From the moment civilization began, it has been developing technological systems for expanding its control. Control, of course, operates through the limitation of the capacity of that which is controlled to act or function on its own terms. Thus, contrary to the way in which they are frequently perceived, technological systems have not developed in order to broaden human capacities, but own order to limit the autonomy of both the wild world and human individuals (who as such are always potentially "wild") in order to enforce power. Every technological development ends up practically limiting the relationships possible among living beings and between living beings and their environment by channeling these into increasingly homogenized and rationalized modes of activity and interaction.

The chatter about bourgeois society placing great value upon the individual is ridiculous. The "individual" of bourgeois society has always been a mere cipher with nothing individual about it. In fact, bourgeois society placed its greatest value—it least in the ideological realm—upon reified Reason. Beginning in the Renaissance, the ideology that nature and society, and therefore also the individual, should be subjected by every means necessary to the dictates of Reason. Individuals such as Giordano Bruno, who saw a universe permeated with passionate life that flowed and surged beyond the limits of Reason and Religion, were looked upon as heretics and sometimes faced the stake. For this reified Reason, no longer a tool of living individuals but rather a power over them, was essentially mechanistic and its aim was precisely to limit the wild surging experienced by Bruno and other so-called heretics, to bring it under control of the newly rising capitalist order. Here we find the justification for ever-increasing technological development leading to industrialization, Taylorism, cybernetization and on to the latest intrusions of

technology directly into our bodies.

If it is an error to think of bourgeois ideology as centering around the individual, it is equally wrong to see the central problem of capitalism as being that of excessiveness, of a lack of limits. This is an example of a very common error in analysis, mistaking a symptom for the source. It is certainly true that capital expands itself into every corner of the world, but it is necessary to recognize what this system is in order to understand the significance of this expansion and recognize what needs to be attacked. Capital, and in fact civilization in its totality, is an ever-expanding system of limitations, an attempt to bring everything that exists under control.

Thus, the revolt against this system is a refusal of all limitations. And the refusal of limitations is also the refusal of renunciation, self-sacrifice and obligation. Marx and many other early communists wanted a scientific revolution that occurred in accordance with a rational historical development. Many present-day "radicals" want a revolution based upon the renunciation of "privilege" on the part of those who are supposedly less oppressed and the sacrifice of their energy to the causes of those supposedly most oppressed. Bakunin, however, recognized that only the unleashing of the wildest passions of the oppressed and exploited could truly create a force capable of tearing this society down.

But the unleashing of our wildest passions requires the rejection of every vestige of Christian and bourgeois morality, of every limitation imposed upon us by external and internal ideological police. In the struggle against domination and exploitation here and now, we are facing a global order that grants know quarter in its insistence upon conforming everything to its mechanized, measured rule. To place any limits on ourselves, to renounce anything, is to lose everything. Once again, the principle that the means must contain the end applies. Against civilization's greeting card sentimentality,

channeled and commodified wants and measured calculations, it is necessary to unleash passions, desires and reasons that know no measure and recognize no limits and, thus, cannot be bought off.

Volume Five

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On the World in Which We Live

As anarchists, we do not define our aims or our projects within the limits imposed by the world in which we live. Revolution aims to overturn these limits, to destroy all that stands in the way of realizing our desire to make our life together our own. But this puts us in conflict with the world in which we live, and it is here that we live out that struggle. So it is necessary for us to examine this world, to analyze the social relationships that are in operation and to come to an understanding of what is at play on the field in the ongoing social war.

So let's take a look at this world. What we are facing can seem overwhelming. The war against Iraq, the vicious conflicts in Africa, the ongoing Israeli attack against Palestinians are just a few of the more blatant horrors of this world. But it is necessary to try to see a larger picture in order to put these situations in context.

The world in which we live is dominated by a single social order, the current face of western civilization, the order of the state and capital. This social order aims toward total domination, but it would be a mistake to think it has achieved this. Although it has spread its network of control across the entire globe, it is spread thin. At its margins and beneath its vision other ways of being and relating continue to exist – at times in open conflict with this order. Its spread across the globe has forced it to develop decentralized methods of social reproduction and control that form a bureaucratic and technological network – with the technological aspect becoming increasingly dominant. The relationships of domination and exploitation are built directly into this network and so it is not really under anyone's control, not even that of the rulers of this world. Its control is not only based on the technological monitoring of our activity, but more significantly lies in the

fact that the technological system makes us dependent upon it while defining the parameters of our interactions with it within very narrow limits. In short, it makes us cogs in the social machine.

But this network is stretched very thin. It is fragile and full of holes. Malfunction and disaster are basic norms of daily existence within this world. As long as they and their power are not threatened, the rulers of this world don't really care. Their social and environmental reforms merely ways to try to extend the natural and human resources available for them to exploit.

In the meantime, the impoverishment of the exploited is advancing on all levels. As always, we take the brunt of every economic catastrophe. And for us, the current advance of capital across the globe is itself a catastrophe. As it spreads to the "less developed" areas of the globe, millions are being forced to leave the land on which they made their lives and head for the cities. Gigantic shantytowns develop around the growing metropolises of the world filled with people forced to scrape by, selling themselves cheap to anyone willing to pay and engaging in whatever illegal activities are necessary in order to survive. Many decide to immigrate in hope of find something better. Instead they just find more exploitation and poverty, along with harassment by the cops and potential imprisonment for the lack of a slip of paper. The rulers use this pool of cheap labor that can be hyper-exploited as blackmail against the rest of the exploited in order to impose worsening conditions on every level.

In fact, precariousness on all levels is the norm for the exploited and dispossessed of this world. Precariousness at the job, precariousness about whether one can pay the rent or the bills, the precarious state of the environment and of our health due to environmental pollution and toxins in our food.

The common precariousness shared by the exploited could provide a basis for people to intertwine their struggles to

transform their existence. Current developments in capitalist society are simply making existence less and less bearable for more and more people, and if we start to see how our struggles against this world could unite, that might prove disastrous for the ruling order. The masters of this world are quite aware of this and have been openly practicing preventative repression for years. The events of September 11, 2001 simply gave them an excuse to openly codify what they were already doing.

But the existence that the ruling order is imposing continually meets with resistance. In much of South America struggles of the poor and of indigenous people have shaken up the social order. Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and so on have seen ongoing revolt at various levels for years. There has been an ongoing insurrection in Algeria, centering in—but not limited to—the Kabyle region since April 2001. We hear as well of rebellions in Korea and of indigenous people of Canada resisting state intrusion. Though it is difficult to know what exactly is going on in Iraq through the media fog, the people there have been steadily resisting the American occupation. It seems that some aspects of this resistance may escape the limitations of religious and nationalist struggle.

Another significant point of resistance is the return of the wildcat. Over the past several months, transit and airline workers in Italy, dock workers in Spain, medical workers in Canada and independent truckers in L.A. and Oakland, just to name a few, have staged wildcat strikes, reviving a form of self-organized struggle that seemed to have nearly vanished. Strikers have used blockades and sabotage as weapons in these battles, and sabotage is also appearing more frequently in the midst of official strikes, much to the chagrin of union officials.

Blockades are proving useful in a wide variety of struggles. In Bolivia, Argentina and Algeria blockades of major highways

have played a major role in the insurgence. In November of last year, people in the Basilicata region of Italy organized massive blockades of the whole reason to stop the building of a nuclear waste dump there. Their struggle was successful and, from what I understand, they have continued to hold assemblies (like those they used to organize the blockades) for horizontal discussion of their lives and the problems they face.

In addition, the concentration camps that every democratic state has built for imprisoning undocumented foreigners have not been places of quiet resignation. Hunger strikes, protest, riots and escapes are frequent. There have been several incidents in which protesters outside of the camps have aided escaping immigrants. It is an area in which external solidarity is absolutely necessary.

There is of course much else to say about the world in which we live: the many daily humiliations imposed on us from surveillance cameras to the passionless courtesy (or rudeness) of transactions of exchange; the many daily, often hidden, rebellions against this. But this paints a very general picture of some of the realities we need to take into account in developing our theory and practice of revolt. As an anarchist with a critique of civilization, I recognize that if I cannot make my critiques relevant to the realities of this world, if I cannot put them into practice in the struggle against exploitation and domination here and now, then they are of little use. This involves exploring the connections between various struggles, the places where they can weave together. It involves a capacity to recognize how solidarity can operate as an expression of the need and desire we each have to take our lives back as our own. The world in which we live needs to be destroyed so that the possibilities for creating our lives on our own terms open up. It is up to us to figure out the weak points to attack and to discover our accomplices in this

crime called freedom. Being aware of the reality we face and the battles now being waged against it is a first step.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION:
A Few Points for Discussion

All culture is plagiarism

Within radical circles these days, there is much talk about "cultural appropriation". Unfortunately, much of this discussion takes the form of moral debates about whether it's okay for those of European heritage to wear dreadlocks, perform hip-hop, etc. This is just another example of political correctitude calling us to further renunciations. Rather than continuing these rounds of self-flagellation, I think that it is much more useful to examine the nature of culture and how it has been affected by capital and to consider possible directions for an anarchist response.

First of all, healthy, living cultures are not objects, set in stone once and for all, defined and confined within the prison of national or ethnic borders. Rather, cultures are relationships, not only among the people of the culture, but also with other cultures and people. This means that living cultures are fluid, perpetually changing, taking in and giving out new forms and method of being, becoming and creating. Cultural life depends upon this ongoing process of mutual appropriation. Without it any culture will die, and this is what transforms it into an object.

Capitalism has no culture of its own, precisely because culture requires fluidity and living relationships. When capital appropriates cultures, it destroys them as living entities because it can offer nothing living in return (nor is it interested in doing so). In fact, it interacts with the cultures it encounters in

the same way as it interacts with every individual life within capitalist society: it reifies, commodifies, fragments, atomizes and homogenizes them. Let's look at this process. Say, for example, that capital encounters the cultures of Morocco. Immediately an assessment of the potentials of production for profit must be made. So an abstract concept of Moroccan culture must be outlined—Moroccan music, Moroccan art, Moroccan fashion, and so on must be defined. The culture must be separated from the entire cultural flow of northern Africa, the Mediterranean, Arabic, Berber and Tuareg migrations and interactions, etc. This fragmentation allows the culture to be reified, made into a set thing rather than a flow of relationships. It also makes it possible for capital to further fragment the culture itself, separating music, for example, from its daily life context. With this separation comes commodification: the music is put on a CD and offered for sale around the world. And here we see the kind of homogenization capitalism imposes. Every kind of music now appears on identical little shiny discs in nearly identical plastic packaging with a price tag. It has all become a product for sale. This transformation of all culture into products for sale reinforces atomization because it is no longer necessary for us to come together and relate in order to create what we love and desire. Instead we can simply buy its reified form at the shop, limiting our human interactions to the exchange of money for goods. Those who make the music become laborers producing a cultural commodity, selling their creativity where it is not simply stolen.

Since capital turns culture into a dead thing through this process, it can only appropriate cultural ***artifacts***. It simply drains the culture of life in order to attain these saleable artifacts. The reaction of those whose cultures are appropriated by capital is generally defensive. The people of a culture experiencing this capitalist invasion try to entrench their culture against this intrusion. Unfortunately, this reaction plays right into

the capitalist process. Entrenching a culture, making it into a ***thing*** to defend removes it from the interactive flow of its living history and kills it as an ongoing, borderless relationship. Instead it becomes a kind of sacred property to be protected and kept pure. This separates particular cultures from the surrounding cultures with which they have had relationships of mutual appropriation, thus causing the fragmentation capital needs. It also turns the culture into a thing in itself that is separate from the daily lives of those who live within it. Thus, this very process of attempting to defend cultures against capital transforms them into what all cultures become within capital, a finished product. And this finished product is not really significantly different from any other reified culture since the real, vital differences between cultures spring from their living relationships, the flows of mutual appropriation in which they were involved. Once a culture has become reified, whether by capital or in its attempt to defend itself against capital, the next logical step is the selling of its cultural artifacts.

The failure of these attempts to defend cultures against capitalist appropriation lie in the fact that defense of cultures requires their transformation into a kind of sacred property. But property is only sacred to those who recognize that sacredness. So for this defense to work, the people seeking to defend their culture must demand recognition from the ruling order. In other words, they must demand their rights. The problem is that rights and recognition are defined by those who grant them, and in this case that means the ruling order of capital. And when capital recognizes the right to sacred property, it means the right to sell a product on the market. Thus, it is quite willing to grant this right, since in doing so, ***it wins***.

In light of all this, discussions over Euro-Americans wearing dreadlocks or doing hip-hop are thoroughly irrelevant. Taken to its logical conclusion, this sort of moralizing could end up condemning international travel or learning other languages. It

is obvious how absurd and ass-backwards such reasoning is.

The real problem lies with the entire social order of capital and the state which requires the transformation of living human relations into predetermined roles and products from which profit can be drawn. I have already shown how a defensive stance only ends up reinforcing this process. This indicates that it is necessary instead to attack this process of reification, fragmentation, commodification and atomization. And in order to develop this project of attack, the exploited and the dispossessed need to discover ways to interweave their struggles against the ruling order, to find the points of complicity, affinity and solidarity. In this way, what was really living in culture can be rediscovered in the midst of our battle against this society and form the basis for creating new fluid and dynamic relationships capable of realizing our desires and needs in an integrated manner free from the impositions of the economy and the state. Confronting the ruling order in this way may not save what has been, but it will open up new possibilities for life against the way of death imposed by the ruling order.

THE MYTH OF PROGRESS
And the Problem of Civilization(s)

Since the enlightenment, the Western ruling order, which now rules throughout the world, has justified itself mainly in the name of Progress* But Progress is a myth, an overarching ideology by which modern western civilization has tried to uphold its values. In other words, Progress is the way through

* I have capitalized "Progress" throughout this article to clarify that I am speaking about it as an alleged historical force and a great ideal above us, not as the steps toward accomplishing a particular task or as real improvement of a particular situation.

which the social order of capitalism, industrialism and the state throws its own values back across the totality of human history interpreting everything on its terms.

The myth of Progress has some significant implications. First of all, it implies that the present social reality is the best that has ever been, that all that ever was has been leading to this and that future improvement lies along the same path. From this, it follows that what was ***and what currently appears to remain as what was*** (so called primitive and peasant cultures) are inferior to what is currently the most "advanced" human condition. This all further implies that there is one single path for humanity to follow and thus that only one civilization has developed. And finally, it implies that there is a single great end toward which history aims.

Before going into the blatant fallacies of this myth revealed in these implications, it is necessary to point out that this myth rose together with the development of the Western scientistic/technological ideology and practice of the modern era. Thus, human Progress is interpreted as ***scientific*** and ***technological*** Progress. Advancement is understood as the advancement of techniques and of the level of human dependence upon techniques combined with the quantity of facts compiled and stored by the society as a whole, which is then defined as human knowledge. Thus the end toward which history aims is human domination over nature—a conception that requires the civilized conception of a unified nature that stands in mute opposition to human culture.

At this point the myth of Progress stands in tatters (but it still stands) because the technology it upholds has so clearly gone out of control and the some of the science it upholds has undermined a number of its own assumptions. At this point the endless parade of wars, disasters, epidemics and increasing misery make the idea that this social order is the best that ever was, the highest human achievement, a sad joke. And the idea

of continuing along the same path is absurd, particularly when the scientists and technicians themselves tell us that this way is leading to disasters on a scale far beyond the horrors we have yet seen, from water wars to possible ice ages, and at the same time, speak of the new technologies that may even make the human organism "obsolete"—if one accepts the myth of Progress. It is obvious that a human existence worth pursuing lies elsewhere.

Furthermore, science itself has undermined any conception of a single path, a single civilization developing toward an ultimate goal. The fact that modern western civilization—capital, the state and their technological system—has come to dominate the globe has allowed it to make its evolution the official history of the world, so that "Fertile Crescent" is still called "the cradle of civilization". Yet Chinese, Japanese, Incan, Mayan and Aztec civilizations have no connection to this "cradle". Thus, there has not been just one single civilization progressing (either steadily or dialectically), but several different civilizations with different perspectives and different myths through which they upheld their values. Some of these civilizations seem to have used a myth of Stability—even of apparent eternity—rather than one of Progress to uphold their civilizations.

Nor has the development of western civilization at all been a smooth or even a steady dialectical development. Instead, a variety of civilizations had brief developments, and then fell before other newly arising civilizations in a variety of conflicts. The apparent picture of a relatively smooth evolution is the invention of modern western civilization which lays claim to all the written records from Sumeria west-ward as a single path progressing to the present.

In recent decades, some of the ideological proponents of the ruling order have proclaimed the "end of history". This proclamation may be a necessary response to two realities. First of all, the fact that the myth of Progress is in tatters precisely at

the time when a single civilization, capable of recasting history in its own image, dominates the globe. The proclamation of the "end of history" both allows historians to proclaim the domination of this single civilization to be the ***aim*** of history and offers a new myth of Stability and Inevitability to replace the myth of Progress. The second thing this proclamation may be trying to confront is the reality of a technological apparatus that is no longer truly under human control. The idea of this apparatus as a tool through which human beings dominate nature can no longer stand up to the reality of the apparatus itself. Thus, the idea of progress as the historical development of humanity toward total domination over nature is absurd since human beings are no longer in control. The proclamation of the "end of history" can declare this juggernaut to be the technological achievement of the true aim of history. And yet, as we look at the results socially, psychologically and environmentally, a history with such an aim seems utterly absurd.

In light of what is now known, those critiques of civilization that consider it as a single entity with a single development need to be rethought. We can certainly see traits that all civilizations have had in common, particularly the various institutions of domination and exploitation—state institutions, economic institutions, social institutions and systems of techniques developed to put and keep people in their place. But trying to trace this all back to a single source may reflect a continuing attachment to the myth of Progress, even if this Progress is viewed negatively. The danger in this lies in developing an almost christian view of history. This single source takes on the role of original sin leading to an inevitable fall. The "end of history" becomes an apocalypse, which may lead to redemption. In any case, just like the positive version of the myth of Progress, this negative version implies a kind of determinism that takes the capacity for making or destroying history out of our hands.

In fact, we know that many civilizations have arisen at various times. Most have been short-lived and collapsed. Some have quickly settled into a relatively static form and carried on in that form for ages. All of them have existed as a network of institutions of domination and exploitation into which people were to be fit. For this reason, I think it makes sense to define civilization as a network of such institutions. But modern western civilization was able to come to dominate the globe because of specific historical conditions that came together in Europe about five to six hundred years ago. The gradual conquest of the globe that followed was justified with the myth of Progress, but the reality has been an ongoing degradation of humanity and the rest of the living world.

The dream of going backwards still buys into the myth of Progress, even though in the negative sense. It still implies a single path along which humanity has traveled. It is the *reversal* of history rather than either its rejection or its reappropriation. As I see it the *progressive* conception of history—the ideological justification of the present order of things—has never made sense from the standpoint of our freedom as individuals to create our lives together as we see fit. It has always placed a "higher value" above us, a great ideal which we are to serve. History in this sense needs to be rejected by those of us who want to create our lives on our own terms. But there is another way of conceiving history that can turn it against civilization and the myth of Progress. It is the conception of history as the game we play when we place our lives at stake against this world in the individual and collective creation of freedom here and now in open revolt against the juggernaut that dominates and threatens our lives, wagering that the world can be radically transformed, that destroying a world of domination can take us *elsewhere*. Having ceased to be puppets, *let's play!*

ON THE DEGRADATION OF LANGUAGE AND THE ART OF LISTENING

When you call someone a name you stop listening to him.

I do not write, publish, speak or discuss in order to propagate a fixed set of ideas for others to embrace; I'm not interested in disciples or followers. I do so to communicate and discuss my own fluid and evolving ideas, my desires, my dreams, my experiences and my projects as clearly as possible in order to discover affinities, to find accomplices with whom to share my activities. I am convinced that the only real wealth worth pursuing is found in other people with whom one can share the creation of a life together aimed at the realization of the needs and desires of each and every one. Therefore, I gladly throw my words out into the world as a wager that they will strike a resonant chord with others with whom I can share projects of revolt against the ruling order and of taking back our lives and activities as our own. Unfortunately, often these words, chosen with so much care, seem to meet misunderstandings of the strangest sorts.

My desires, my dreams and, thus, my projects are informed by a revolutionary perspective, that is, by the recognition that it is necessary to make a fundamental, destructive break with the existing world in order to open the possibility for a world in which we can truly create our lives together on our own terms. The existing world, dominated by the state, capital and their technological and ideological machinery of control, defines wealth in terms of the things that one owns. In such a world, human beings themselves become things that are owned by the apparatus, the ruling institutions. Their value is not in the unique beauty of their being, but in their capacity to produce more

things either physically in the form of products or socially in the form of roles and predetermined relationships. Thus, what is unique in each of us is suppressed in the interest of production. Wealth in this sense is purely quantitative, the ownership of a large amount of shit, possession of a greater share of the impoverished reality that this world imposes. All this must be destroyed if we are to create a world in which we recognize the qualitative wealth of the uniqueness that each one of us has to offer the other. And this is the project I try to express.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to express such a project. Finding the balance between the simplicity that makes one's language accessible and the complexity that is necessary to express how this revolutionary desire confronts the catastrophic reality of the world in which we live is not easy. It requires a certain precision and delicacy. By delicacy, I do not at all mean gentleness. Rather, I mean the use of great care in choosing the words that can best express one's meaning while avoiding the pitfalls set by the increasing degradation of language in anarchist circles that has been caused by ideological thinking. But even this is not always enough. Real communication is never one-way, and the degradation of language (and ideas) doesn't just affect how people say things, but also how they hear things. Those who make their language the servant of ideological ways of thinking will not so much listen to what someone says as filter it into the appropriate places within the frameworks of their systems for viewing the world.

The desire for simplicity itself can be a danger here. Things certainly seem simpler when we feel we have found the answers, so that we no longer need to call our ideas, our activities, our lives and ourselves into question. In a world of every day misery and catastrophe, the codified categories of ideology can be particularly reassuring. But this sort of reassurance comes at the expense of real communication and real discussion. Exchanges of words are reduced to mutual reassurances, evangelistic outreach

and condemnations of those who don't agree. The capacity to listen disappears, taking with it any possibility for real debate. Let's look at a few examples of how this can work.

Activism, as a specialized role, carries its own vague ideology: things are bad, we need to do something to change them, we need to organize people for this purpose. Quite vague, indeed. But it doesn't prevent activists from being fervent believers and hard-core evangelists. For the activist, as for any evangelist, the individuals they encounter are not unique human beings with whom to create relationships or share life, they are ciphers to convert into tools for the cause. Activists have sacrificed their own uniqueness and humanity to whatever cause, so why would they expect less of others? Thus, when activists speak of communicating with others, they mean that they are out to organize those others to fight for their cause. The activist transforms talking with your neighbors about the realities you face together into community organizing to build a movement.

Unfortunately, this activist ideology can seep into the way of thinking of individuals who are critical of activism and leftism, leading even these people to hear meanings in words that aren't there. Thus, recently when I spoke of the need to talk with those around us about what we are facing in the world today and what we desire, one person asked if I was talking about "movement building", a term with which I wasn't familiar, but that sounds like something that would contradict my entire project as I've live and expressed it. (This individual was at least just asking and not immediately labeling and accusing, bur her question left me flabbergasted.) Another, when I was not present, said that it sounded like the same old leftist shit (or something to that effect) and then later referred to me in writing as a "reformist community organizer". I never knew that the idea of talking with one's neighbors could carry so much baggage. Then again I've never been an activist or an organizer,

and have carefully kept my distance from that sort of thinking. I always thought talking with someone meant just that, talking with someone. But ideological filters to listening can twist the simplest things into a complex maze of hidden implications in which the possibilities for meaningful discussion get lost.

But the worst attacks against open, straightforward communication within the anarchist milieu in recent years stem from the intrusion of political correctitude into the milieu. Political correctitude finds its clearest voice in the identity politics that became the dominant voice of the American left in the 1980's. I was fortunate and managed to have very little direct contact with the preachers of political correctitude and identity politics for quite a while. It was clear to me that they were promoting an ideology based in victimization. Identity politics is an ideology based upon identifying with the category (or categories) through which one is oppressed: race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or whatever. In other words, one identifies with the categories that the ruling order has imposed. This identification is then supposed to be embraced as a source of pride, unity and strength. I don't want to go into a full critique of this here, but only want to deal with the aspects relevant to communication. First of all, defining one's identity in terms of one's oppression is defining oneself as a victim (euphemisms such as "survivor" don't change this). This leaves one feeling perpetually vulnerable and puts one on the defensive. Here is the basis for political correctitude. People who are always on the defensive, in need of being provided with a feeling of safety, become overly sensitive to language, granting it a power over them that it need not have. In "communication", such people no longer look for actual meaning, but put their radar out for the code words and phrases that they have defined as inherently oppressive. Their rage will scream out at the wrong word in the wrong place or at another's refusal to use the words and categories of

their ideology. In the meantime, their real oppressors in the ruling class use smooth, politically correct language to enforce their oppression. A linguistic moral order is established that creates only one real change: the reduction of our capacity to communicate. In addition, creating a group identity involves identifying an opposing group to which the first group contrasts itself. If one defines oneself in terms of race or gender or sexual orientation, then this contrasting other must be defined in the same terms, and so the world gets divided into "people of color/white", "female/male", "gay/straight", etc. (or more accurately, this supposedly radical ideology maintains and enforces the divisions the ruling order has already created). Since the first group in each set is oppressed, obviously the second group must be the oppressors, regardless of what any of them as individuals have actually done. Individual responsibility is swallowed up in an automatic collective guilt. But precisely because this collective guilt is detached from the real concrete acts of individuals, some mechanism to explain it must be developed. And so we learn that all "white people", all "males" and all "straight people" are "privileged". And people from oppressed groups who adhere to these categories, along with their humble auxiliary of willing political correctitude cops drawn from the "privileged" groups, can use this alleged "privilege" to automatically discredit someone. Thus, this ideology justifies the worst sort of ***ad hominem*** argument, the kind based on supposedly inherent traits, not on real actions of the person involved. It should be obvious how this closes down the capacity for really listening, and thus for real discussion and communication. A statement such as "…white folks, straight people and men need to shut the fuck up" is not on offer for discussion or communication and certainly not an attempt to open up an exploration of affinities and possibilities for shared projects. It is a command clearly intended to call someone to accept a subordinate position. Again, people are seen as

things, as categories, and "communication" is reduced to the arrangement of these things, making real listening irrelevant.

Communication and the capacity for listening have also deteriorated due to the entrenchment of positions that has become prevalent within anarchist circles in recent years. This entrenchment can be seen in the ongoing tendency to create categorical dichotomies: social anarchism vs. life-style anarchism, green anarchy vs. classical anarchism, and the like. The capacity to make distinctions and even complete breaks where necessary is important and must not be lost in some ecumenical haziness in which we all just embrace each other in an incoherent orgy of contradictory conceptions drained of meaning. But the capacity to make distinctions also means the capacity to recognize false dichotomies that serve no other purpose than to define one's own ideological identity. In fact, there is much in the entrenchment of positions within the American anarchist milieu that parallels the functioning of identity politics. For example, there tends to be a hyper-sensitivity to words that are taken out of context and drained of meaning (recent discussions about the word "communism" provide a fine example). There is also a tendency to use labels to consign the "other" to a hostile ideological camp and end discussion in this way. A sad example is the way some people have begun to use "leftist" to label anyone who disagrees with them. In this way, the necessary harsh critique of the left loses its content and degenerates into a vacuous "anti-left" ideology that serves no other purpose than to silence one's critics. If we are to ever discover where our real affinities and differences lie, we need to leave the safety of our entrenched positions, throw away our ideological filters, and actually listen to each other, sharing fierce but principled critiques and recognizing that since we are still living and the world is still changing, none of us has found the answer. We have so much we need to talk about, but it is useless to try if we cannot listen, if we only put

up the radar for signals that help us place others and their ideas into our ideological categories. So among the anarchist projects worthy of effort is the revival of the fine art of listening that makes communication as peers possible. But this is not an easy task since it involves attacking one's own entrenched positions as well as those of others.

Communication is hard enough where the art of listening has been nurtured. A few words are never enough to express all that a person has to say. The passionate reasons that goad one into action cannot fit into a few lines on a few pages. In fact, an endless flow of words would still not be enough to express it all. But the point is not to express it all in words; the point is to leave a clue, a verbal finger pointing toward the moon of one's ideas and dreams that says just enough to find accomplices in the crime of freedom. Unfortunately, these days most people only "think" from the entrenched positions of their confused ideological conceptions and contradictory dogmas, and so one cannot expect to be understood by very many. From such confinement, most can only see the pointing finger. But the few who can think and feel and dream outside of every ideological fortress may be able to hear these words and respond with comprehension, critically, their eye upon the moon. And maybe a few critical voices, striving fiercely for clarity, will be able to break through the entrenched positions, and the art of listening will make real discussion a possibility again.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAGER

The world has to change now; if it doesn't we'll all die as exiles in an inhuman world.

We are living in desperate times. The capacity to dream and desire appears to be depleted. Most people merely seem to resign themselves to what is. It is, therefore, not surprising that even some anarchists are turning to apocalyptic visions of "the end" rather than pursuing projects of revolutionary transformation—projects which require a capacity both to dream and desire and to look at the world as it is in terms of how to go about realizing those dreams and desires.

I have recently heard certain anarchists declare that revolutionary projects are "unrealistic" and that people should instead prepare for an inevitable collapse of civilization. The determinism inherent in this view may give those who hold it a kind of hope, but it is a sad hope, lacking joy. The joylessness of this perspective stems from the fact that those who hold it are placing their bet on an apocalyptic event that is beyond their control rather than on their own capacity to act and interact, to join together with others to create a rupture with the present. Some of those who hold to this perspective advocate acting to speed up the collapse, thus supporting a kind of violence against the civilized order. But in rejecting the possibility of a revolutionary project, they remove the acts of violence they advocate from any social context. And this is where the sadness of this perspective manifests. The rejection of the possibility of revolution is the rejection of the dream of consciously creating life together in a different manner (except maybe among a small group of friends). The advocates of this

apocalyptic gospel no longer recognize the social wealth that exists in other human beings, a wealth that is beyond measure, beyond calculation, because it is precisely in the relationships we develop with other human beings that we create our own unique and boundless individuality. Having lost the social, human aspect, the attacks they conceive to speed up the collapse degenerate into mere revenge against this society or expressions of moral superiority. Calculating, militaristic thinking begins to infect their activity with conceptions of "acceptable loss" and comparative body counts.

But the reality of a world that seems to be perpetually on the edge of catastrophe is perceived more clearly by others, not in terms of apocalyptic hope, but rather of increasing fear that soon all may be lost. Fear and despair seem to be the dominant feelings of these times. This is no accident. Those who rule this world find their most useful weapon in fear and the paralysis of despair. But only in those places and times where the catastrophic explodes forth in specific disasters—wars, epidemics, environmental devastation, slaughters, etc.—does this take the form of explicit terror. Far more often, at least here in the Western world, it takes the form of resignation and an underlying dread that eats away at the most sensitive minds. Those who cannot or will not embrace religion, patriotism, apocalyptic hope or any other ideology to gain the illusion of security can be driven to the edge of madness by this dread, making the horrors of this world personal. The sufferings in the Sudan or Iraq or Palestine find their reflection in the emotional suffering of people that I love. What I see collapsing around me is not the civilized social order, but the dreams, the courage and the minds of my friends.

But both hope in a collapse and despair in the face of the present catastrophic reality involve looking at the present world on its terms, not on our own. Those who hold to either perspective have already assumed their own incapacity to

act effectively in the world to realize their own desires and dreams. They, therefore, look at the realities of the world not as challenges to be faced and overcome, but as inevitabilities that must be endured. What is missing Vaneigem, the individual insurrection that is the first step toward social insurrection. To take this step, it is necessary to have the courage to wager on ourselves and our ability to act, on our own when necessary, and together with others whenever possible.

Those of us who desire the end to all forms of domination and exploitation have every reason to wager our lives on the possibility of social revolution—not as a cause above us, but as something desirable and necessary if we are ever to be able to grasp our lives as our own, as something that we create together with others in the way we desire. There are several levels on which the desirability and necessity of social revolution exist. First of all, the social relationships of domination and submission, of exploitation, dispossession and exclusion that are imposed on us leave their scars. Even if it were true that a collapse of civilization was inevitable, if a radical transformation of the ways we relate on the broad social level did not occur, we would simply begin to recreate the old hierarchies and institutions most likely in their ugliest forms. If anyone thinks otherwise, they should look at a few of the places where collapse has occurred on a regional level, such as the Balkans, Rwanda, Somalia or Chechnya. Furthermore, beginning to act towards social revolution in our lives means beginning to change the way we relate with each other and with the world here and now. Our project becomes the exploration of new ways of being in the world based on affinity and the interweaving of our desires, our dreams, our projects and our lives. And that in itself can make life much more enjoyable. In addition, there are places in the world—such as West Papua, Algeria and Latin America – where resistance and revolt are ongoing but where the interests of the West play a major role

in keeping these revolts on the defensive. We can talk all we want of solidarity, but if we are not rising up here, where we are, against the powers that condemn us to lives of obedience and that are destroying the ways of lives of people over there, this is just a lot of chatter. Real solidarity exists in the interweaving of our own revolt with that of those in revolt elsewhere, because the same institutions, the same powers, that impoverish our existence are also destroying the way of life of the indigenous people of West Papua, supporting the police terror in Algeria and promoting their own agenda of exploitation and control in Latin America, so our revolutionary battle for our own liberation is the most useful form of solidarity. And perhaps most importantly, staking our lives on the project of creating social revolution, means wagering on our own capacity to act. Thus, we actually can take some responsibility for the outcome of this wager.

Once a person has made the decision to take her life into her own hands against the ruling order and to begin a project aimed at a revolutionary break with the existence it imposes, he has already changed the way he relates to the world around him. This becomes evident in the way she views this reality. If we want to battle against the ruling order and begin to create a terrain of liberation, we have to understand the terrain of domination, the terrain of capital and the state, as well as that of resistance and revolt. We need to know what forces are at play in the field of social struggle. Without this knowledge, our ideas and dreams have no place to gain footing for actually doing battle with the ruling order, and it is easy to drift into ideology and become irrelevant. But we grasp this knowledge as a weapon to wield against the ruling order so that we can realize our dreams of a new world. Let's consider a bit more deeply what this means in order to avoid confusion.

Social revolution is the overturning of the social relationships of domination and exploitation in order to

open the possibility for creating our lives together on our own terms. This is a destructive project – an attack against the institutions and structures of the ruling order aimed at their complete demolition. But it is also a project of social transformation. If the destructive project does not also carry this transformation within itself, then we will tend to reproduce the very relationships we are out to destroy in the way we carry out our activity. And attempts to transform social relationships that are not also aimed at the destruction of the present social order tend to fall into a reformist logic centered around identity politics and the struggle for equality within the institutional structures or else into pure subcultural escapism. So the destructive and transformative aspects of the project cannot be separated; they are in fact one.

So I feel that the revolutionary project requires the means by which we go about this project to carry our ends within them, so that we don't reproduce the social relationships that we are trying to destroy. I have heard one argument against this that claims that we can never know the consequences of our actions with certainty. We cannot know that such means will bring about our ends. No determining law of cause and effect exists to guarantee this. This is true enough; we cannot know with certainty that any of our projects will succeed whatever method we may use. If we could, there would be no wager, just the smug certainty of those who know the true path. But a lack of certainty about the outcome of this method is no real argument against choosing to use means that carry our ends within them, because my dreams of a radically transformed world are not dreams for a far distant future where I will no longer exist. They are my desires for this moment, for my life here and now. And this is the most significant reason why my ends must exist within my means. It is the only way to guarantee that on some level I will begin to realize my dreams in my own life.

Social reality cannot be ignored; it must be destroyed. The destruction of class society, and of the race, gender and other identity roles it imposes, does not come about be simply ignoring class, race, gender, etc. Rather it is necessary to fiercely confront them with our dreams, to wrestle with them in terms of the world we desire. This is not a matter of dealing with "privilege" as that word is generally used these days among certain so-called anarchists, with its moralistic and self-sacrificial connotations, but of fighting actively against roles and identities that have been imposed on us in such a way as to make the interweaving of our struggle more difficult. This battle requires us to try to understand the different ways in which each of us has experienced dispossession, domination and exploitation. And this is a further reason for seeking to understand the realities that surround us.

Certainly, in order to be able to experiment with the transformation of social relationships, we need to steal back some space from the terrain of domination in order to create a terrain of liberation. In this sense, what some people have said about creating a "counterculture" makes some sense, if by counterculture they mean a way of living against the ruling order, a sustained attack against civilization. But in order to be such an attack, this counterculture cannot be a culture set apart in its own little world. Otherwise it is nothing but another form of escape, perhaps less stultifying than TV and video games and less harmful than alcoholism and heroin, but still of little use in the project of destroying the present social order and transforming social relationships. The struggle against this world requires that we find our accomplices wherever the dispossessed, the exploited, the excluded and those who are simply disgusted and enraged with life as it is are beginning to rebel. And this means refusing to isolate ourselves in our scenes and enclaves.

The world as it is today can seem overwhelming. The idea that revolution is "unrealistic" is not an illogical conclusion, but regardless of the fierceness of the rhetoric of those who assume this, it indicates a surrender to the present reality. No matter how we choose to encounter the world, we are taking a gamble. There are no certainties, and for me this is part of the joy of life. It means that I can make choices on how I will act and that I can base those choices on my own desires. I desire a world in which the relationships between people are determined by those involved in terms of their needs, desires and aspirations. I desire a world in which every system of domination, every form of exploitation, all forms of rule and submission have ceased to exist. If I lay my wager against revolution, I am bound to lose. If instead I stake my life on immediately rebelling against the ruling order with the aim of social insurrection and revolutionary transformation, there is a possibility that I may win in the long run, and in the short run I will definitely win, because I will have made so much of my life my own against the ruling order that I will have actually lived, vibrantly in rage and joy.

About The Author

wolfi landstreicher

What you have in your hands is the collected writings of Wolfi Landstreicher's *Willful Disobedience*. Originally published as a zine from 1996 to 2006, *Willful Disobedience* was a continuously evolving provocation directed towards anarchists and fellow vagabonds to dig deeper into critical thought and joyous rebellion.

During the ten years of publication, *Willful Disobedience* wove together a web of ideas situated in the following threads: an anarchism based in Stirner-influenced egoism; an insurrectionary approach that sees individual insurrection to be as important as social insurrection; a non-primitivist critique of civilization that provides no program or model for a future society; explorations into a class analysis that rejects marxian categories, seeking to understand social relationships as they actually exist; insisting upon the need for anarchists to develop a coherent practice of theory capable of calling everything into question, including one's own ideas, and an anti-political perspective, critical of leftism, democracy, identity politics, and political correctitude.

THE TIME HAS COME
TO SAY THINGS
WITHOUT MINCING WORDS.

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